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## The career of the Empress Judith 819-843

Ward, Elizabeth Frances

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**The career of the empress Judith  
819-843**

**Elizabeth F Ward**

**Thesis submitted for Ph D in History  
2002**

**King's College  
University of London**



## Abstract

### The career of the empress Judith (819-843)

This thesis examines the career of Judith (819-843), the second wife of the Carolingian emperor Louis the Pious (814-840). Judith is an important figure in the history of early medieval queenship, not least because she is the first queen for whom there is enough evidence to enable a study of her career. The introduction challenges Judith's negative historical reputation and assesses its basis in the contemporary sources. In chapter 1, the emperor's choice of Judith as his second wife is seen not as a capricious decision but as indicative of Louis's commitment to a new style of imperial court which required a queen. The evidence for Judith's *dos*, San Salvatore, Brescia is presented in chapter 2. Judith's impact on the royal household in the 820s is examined in chapter 3, chiefly from contemporary sources for that decade, which reveal her relationship with key magnates. It is argued that the birth of Charles the Bald in 823 was not a novel cause of tension in Carolingian family politics. Chapter 4 describes Judith's experience during Pippin's rebellion of 830 and analyses the meanings and background of the charge of adultery against her. Judith's return to the palace after the failure of the coup and her developing role as a significant political patron at court, are addressed in chapter 5. Analysis of Agobard's polemic attacking Judith and her exercise of queenship forms the centre of chapter 6. Chapter 7 addresses Judith's efforts to form a political alliance at court to ensure the endowment of Charles the Bald with a share of the empire. The politics of queenly widowhood, the shifting relationship of mother and son, before and after the battle of Fontenoy, and in the months before Judith's death, are analysed in chapter 8. The conclusion assesses the significance of Judith's career in the development of Frankish queenship.

## Contents

Abstract	p. 2
Acknowledgments	pp. 4 - 5
Preface	p. 6
Abbreviations	p. 7 – 9
Figures:	a) Hrabanus Maurus' portrait of Judith b) Close kin of Judith c) West Frankish realm under Charles the Bald d) Descendants of Charlemagne e) Descendants of Louis the Pious f) Descendants of Charles the Bald
Introduction	pp. 10 – 32
Chapter 1	pp. 33 – 71
Chapter 2	pp. 72 – 89
Chapter 3	pp. 90 – 120
Chapter 4	pp. 121 – 144
Chapter 5	pp. 145 – 171
Chapter 6	pp. 172 – 205
Chapter 7	pp. 206 – 248
Chapter 8	pp. 249 – 277
Conclusion	pp. 278 - 282
Bibliographies	pp. 283 - 301



## Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure for me to honour all the debts of gratitude incurred over the many years I have spent in the company of the empress Judith whilst researching and writing this thesis. First, and above all, I am happy to acknowledge the unstinting support and encouragement of my supervisor at King's College, Professor Janet Nelson. She it was who first suggested that I turn my attention to the reign of Louis the Pious, a neglected period of Carolingian history, and focus on the career of the empress Judith. She has been a generous and stimulating supervisor and I have benefited enormously as an historian in having had the opportunity to work with, and learn from, her about the Carolingian empire in the ninth century. Jinty's careful reading and criticism of all the chapters enabled me to refine and reflect on my ideas. As Dhuoda reminded her son William, 'You will never have another teacher like me,' so I am aware of the privilege of owning Jinty as my teacher.

Caroline Barron, who first taught me medieval history at Bedford College, London, has supported me over the years with much good sense and many congenial lunches. She was kind enough to read portions of my draft text and her careful eye certainly improved the clarity of my historical writing. Tim Wales also proof-read several chapters and in so doing, learnt far more than an early modernist would ever wish to know about the politics of the Carolingian family in the ninth century. Claire Dutton was a cheerful companion on a pilgrimage to a very cold and wintry Aachen in February 1985 in search of Judith and Louis the Pious.

I have had the good fortune to have the support and friendship of colleagues over the years both at London University and in Durham. At Trevelyan College, Durham, Maggie Prestwich volunteered to word-process early drafts into formal chapters. At Queen Mary, London, my colleagues Jim Bolton and Richard Vinen took a lively interest in all things early medieval and cheered me along. I am grateful for the opportunity I had to present my work at the Institute of Historical Research in London, in both the Earlier Middle Ages and Women's History seminars where I

profited from the chance to develop my ideas and respond to the criticism of fellow scholars. I was also fortunate to be invited to present a paper at the international conference on Louis the Pious held at Pembroke College, Oxford in 1986 and at the Ecclesiastical History Society conference on Women in the Church at York in 1989.

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Finally, I am proud to thank my parents, Michael (died, Feast of the Epiphany, 1995) and Nöelle Ward for encouraging me with love, and to recognise the indulgence of my brothers and sisters who have had to live with Judith and the extended Carolingian family for far too long.

This study was partly funded by a British Academy major state studentship 1983-1985.

## Preface

This study has focused on relationships within a family and so it is only right that it should include genealogies. I have taken my family trees for both Judith's kin and the Carolingians from the excellent genealogies provided in Janet Nelson's, *Charles the Bald*, London (1992). Maps of the empire in the reign of Louis the Pious were harder to come by and those that were available for the reign of Charlemagne proved impossible to interpret once they had been reduced to A4 size. I have chosen instead to offer a map of the West Frankish realm in the reign of Charles the Bald, from *Charles the Bald: court and kingdom*, eds., M Gibson and J L Nelson, London, (1990) which includes Aachen and the Frankish heartlands

Books and articles have been given in full when first cited and then referenced in short title. Full references are available in the bibliographies.

## Abbreviations

- AB* *Annales Bertiniani*, ed. F Grat et al., Paris, (1964).
- AF* *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. F Kurze MG SRG 7, Hanover, (1891).
- AM* *Annales Mettenses priores*, ed. B von Simson, MGH SRG, Hanover and Leipzig, (1905).
- ARF* *Annales Regnum Francorum*, ed. F Kurze, MGH SRG, Hanover, (1895).
- Astron* Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. E Tremp, MGH SRG, Hanover, (1995).
- AX* *Annales Xantenenses*, ed. B von Simson, MGH SRG, Hanover, (1909).
- CCCM* Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis
- Charlemagne's Heir* *Charlemagne's Heir: new perspectives on the reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)*, eds. P Godman and R Collins, Oxford, (1990)
- Court and Kingdom* *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, eds. M Gibson and J L Nelson, 2nd ed., London, (1990).
- DOP* *De Ordine Palatii*, eds. T Gross and R Schieffer, MGH Fontes, Hanover, (1980).
- Dümmler, *Geschichte* E. Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reiches*, Berlin, 1 (1862).

Einhard, <i>Vita Karoli</i>	Einhard, <i>Vita Karoli Magni</i> , ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SRG, Berlin, (1911).
Ermold,	Ermold le Noir, <i>Poeme sur Louis le Pieux et epitres au roi Pepin</i> , ed. E. Faral, Paris, (1932).
<i>Epitaphium</i>	Paschasius Radbertus, <i>Epitaphium Arsenii</i> , ed. E. Dümmler, <i>Abhandlungen der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, phil.-hist. Klasse</i> , Berlin, (1900).
<i>FMS</i>	<i>Frühmittelalterliche Studien</i>
<i>LA</i>	Agobard, <i>Libri Apologetici, Opera Omnia</i> , ed. L. Van Acker, CCM, (1981).
Levillain	<i>Recueil des Actes de Pepin I et Pepin II, Rois d'Aquitaine</i> , ed. L. Levillain, Paris, (1926).
Lupus,	<i>Loup de Ferrieres: correspondance</i> , ed. L. Levillain, 2 vols, Paris, (1927-35).
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
AA	Auctores antiquissimi
Capit.	Capitularia regum francorum
Conc.	Concilia
Dipl.	Diplomata
Epp.	Epistolae
Form.	Formulae
Necrol.	Necrologia
Poetae	Poetae Karolini Aevi
SRG	Scriptores rerum germanicarum
SRL	Scriptores rerum langobardum et italicarum
SS	Scriptores

- NMCH II*                      *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol II,  
c.700- c.900, ed. R McKitterick , Cambridge, (1995).
- Nelson, *Charles the Bald*      J L Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, London, (1992).
- Nithard                      Nithard, *Histoire des fils de Louis le Pieux*, ed. P.  
Lauer, Paris, (1926)
- PL*                              *Patrologia Latina*
- SCH*                            *Studies in Church History*
- Sickel                        T. Sickel, *Regesten der Urkunden der ersten Karolinger 751-  
840*, Vienna, (1867).
- Simson, *Jahrbücher*      B. von Simson, *Jahrbücher des fränkischen Reichs unter  
Ludwig dem Frommen*, 2 vols, Leipzig, (1874-6).
- Tessier                      *Receuil des actes de Charles II le Chauve, roi de France*, ed.  
G. Tessier, 3 vols, Paris, (1943-55).
- Thegan                      Theganus, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. E. Tremp, MGH  
SRG, Hanover, (1995).



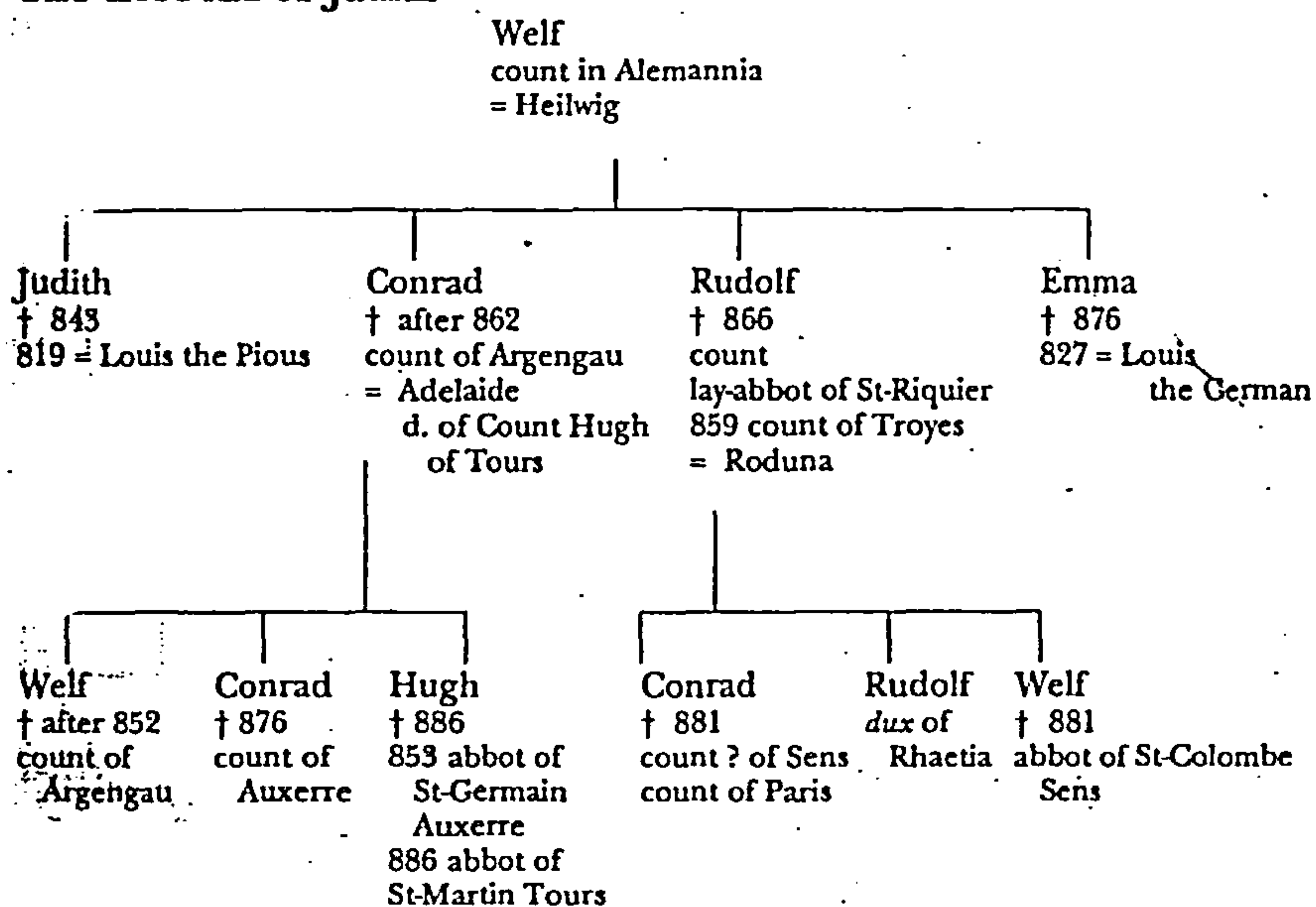
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 o r n a n s s i c q u e t u a d e t a t i s i u r a r e u e l a s  
 d i g n i s u n d e r a t r e o s u m m o n t e s c i r e q u a m u s  
 a t q u a r e s e m p r e t i b i s t u m c r e d e r e n a t u  
 f l a t u s n e m p r e s a r e r u s t e t b i n u m i n e c l a r o  
 p e r m a n e t a e q u a l i t e r u s c u q u i n s a e c u l a u i u i t  
 t u d e u s e s h o m i n u m r e c t o r s a l u t o r c t i d e m  
 p r o e m i a q u i i u s t i s p r o e n a m q u e r e n t i b i n d i s  
 s e x u s p e r s o n a s a c t a t e s p e r s p i c i s a u c t o r  
 m e r c e d e e t p r o p r i a m d o n a s i u s t i s s i o m n i  
 t e q u o q u e d e p o s c a n e l i n q u a s l e d e n e q u a m q a m  
 r e q u i n a f r a u d e n t e u e a s q u e b e n i c n u s a m a t a m  
 t u a t r a c i a s f o r t i s i u d e x a r e c n a r e q u i e t a m  
 i s t i c s i c q u o l o i u d i p s a p a r e t u a d i r e  
 q u o d i c n a t q u o c a t a n s a s i t m u n e r e c n i s t i  
 q u a m h i c m e m o r e s l a e n s p l a c a t s i s e t u b i q u  
 i l l i q u a l e a t c a n e r o o d a q u i c e r e t a s t r i s  
 n e c i a m f i t u o t o r e u s m o r t a l o c u l m e n o l i m p i  
 q u i t e n d i t m e n t e o a s m o r t i n i s a t q u e b e a t i  
 a m b i t q a m t r i b u i t i l l i s y p e p a c t h e p a s e d e  
 a k b i t e k o m i p o t e n s q u i s o l i r e q n a t i n a r c e  
 b i c t u x p r o t u i s s e r u a s p e n s a c c u l a p e r n u e t  
 q o s s a l u a s i l l i c h i c c o r r i p i s a n t e b e n i q u  
 r e x i u s t u s s a n c t u s s e u e n u s m i t i s a m a n d u s  
 f a c n o s u e l l e r o g o t u a i u s s a i m p l e r e q u i t e  
 c o n d i c n i s f a c t i s f i d e i b e n e i u r a t e n e n d o  
 q u o s e d e m s u p e r a m r e c c o n t e u a l d e s e q u e n t e s  
 s c a n d a m u s l a e t i e t c a p i a m u s r e q n a s e r e n a  
 l u x u b i p e r p e t u a e s t u i t a l a u s g l o r i a u e r a  
 p o r a t e r a c n a t u s r e q n a t e t s p i r i t u s a l o i u s  
 u u s n a m q u e d e u s u e r u s s u m m u s q u e c r e a t o r  
 p a r u o s q u i e t m a g n o s s a n a t p e r s a e c u l a i u s t  
 o m n i p e t e s t f a c t o r i u d e x a t q u o m n i b a e q u a s

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 In dextera autem dñi quae supra scripta est & in imagine subter figurate duos versus  
 a d e p i a d e o m o i r o c o n s c r i p t i h o c i n o d o D E X T R A D E I S U M M I C R I S T I I U D I T H  
 I P S E T U E R E O N F U S A L T U S A M O R I n c i r c u l o a u t e m q u i c u n q u e i p s a m i m a g i n e  
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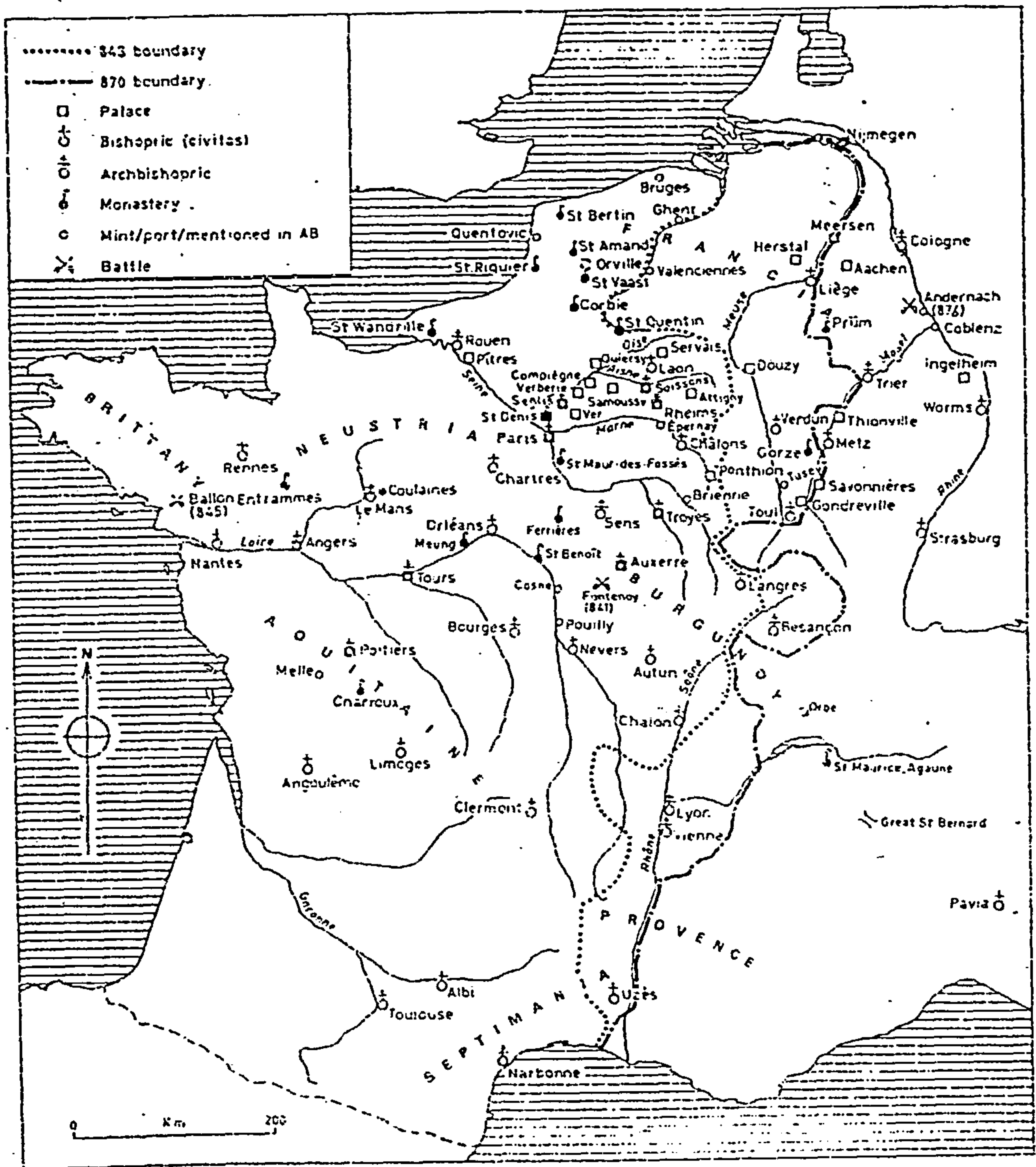


Schramm und Mühlerrich, Jenkmale der deutschen Könige  
und Kaiser 768 - 1250 Munich 1962, p 226

# The close kin of Judith







I: THE WEST FRANKISH REALM UNDER CHARLES THE BALD

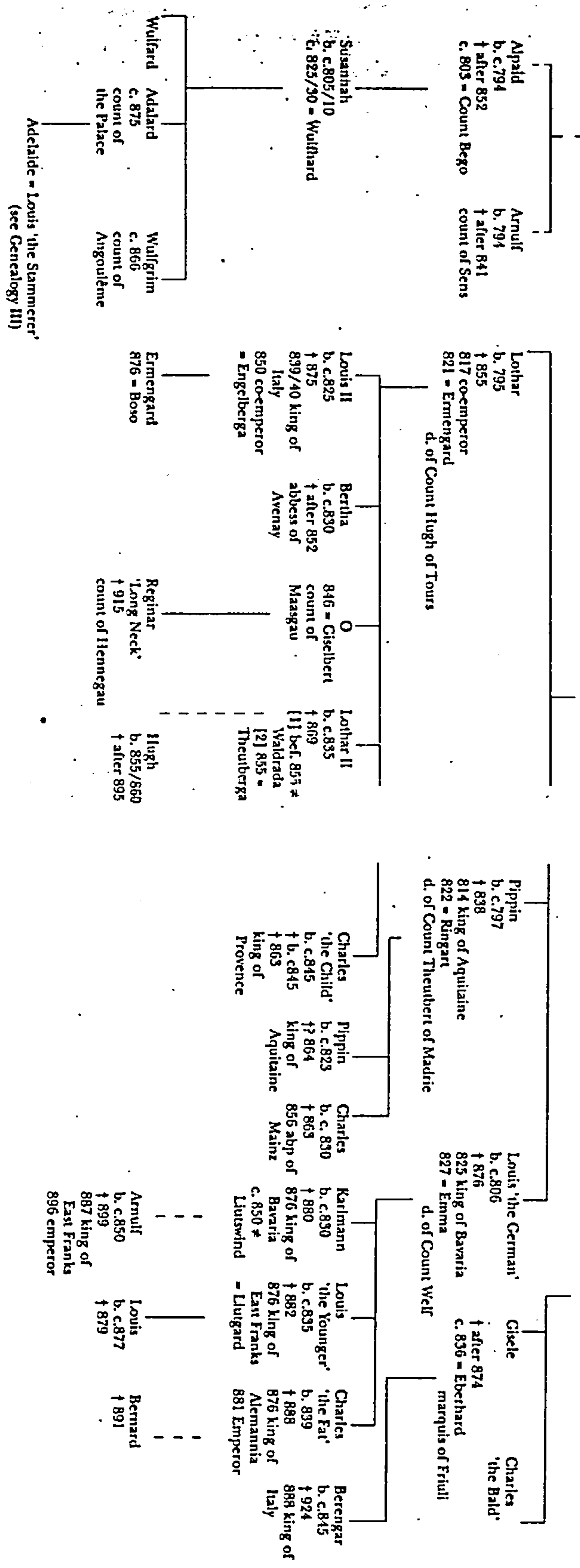


The descendants of Louis the Pious

Louis the Pious  
b. 778  
† 840  
781 king of Aquitaine  
814 emperor

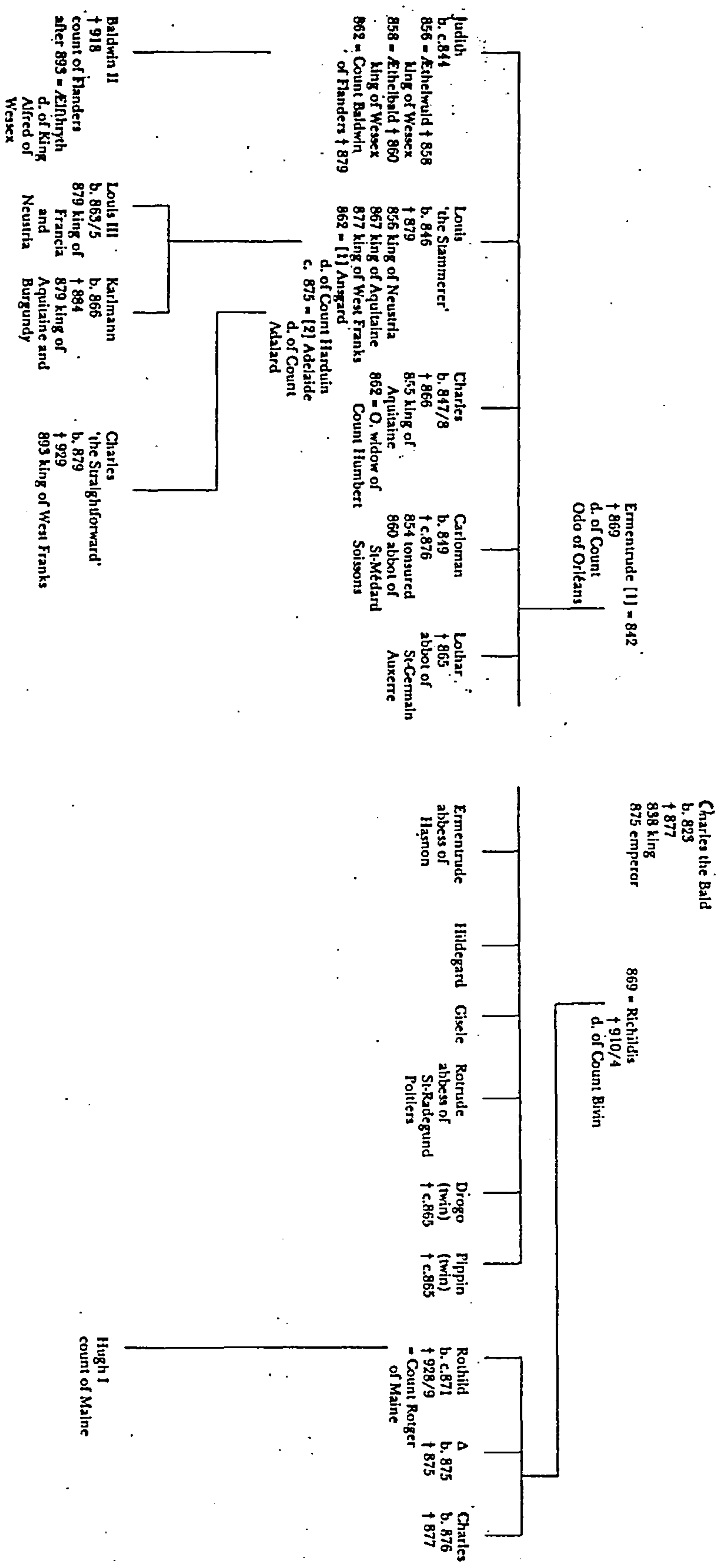
[1] c. 793 = 0  
[2] c. 794 = Ermengard  
† 818  
d. of Count Ingram

[3] 819 = Judith  
† 843  
d. of Count Welf



f

The descendants of Charles the Bald



## Introduction

The landscape of medieval monarchy has been transformed in the last twenty-five years by the study of queenship, to the extent that we can no longer imagine kingship without addressing the role, power, and office of the queen. Indeed where she is absent or her status denied or power downgraded, this now has to be explained.<sup>1</sup> As on the chessboard, where there is a king there is also a queen. Queens and royal women have now entered the visual field of medieval historians, their experience no longer offered in biographies of kings to provide sentimental colour, or to illustrate the domestic or private life of the king and his family.<sup>2</sup> Marriage, married life and marital sex, childbirth and childbearing, the care and education of children, family relationships and conflicts, and above all the negotiation of power within personal relationships between men and women in royal courts, in other words all that was once designated personal and private is now to be included within a definition of the political. For, after all, hereditary kingship is itself, normally, based on the sexual relationship between a king and a queen.

This new wave of interest in medieval queens in the earlier middle ages has been the product of imaginative and pioneering work, for the most part, of female British historians, in particular Pauline Stafford and Janet Nelson whose re-evaluation of

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<sup>1</sup> Wessex in the reign of Alfred for example, P Stafford, 'The King's wife in Wessex', in *Past and Present*, 91, (1981) pp. 3-27, especially pp. 15-20 ; more pertinent to the concerns of this study is the absence of a queen in the last years of Charlemagne's reign, see J L Nelson, 'Women at the court of Charlemagne: A case of monstrous regiment?' in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. J C Parsons, Stroud, (1994), pp. 43-62.

<sup>2</sup> Georges Duby has famously insisted on a distinction between public and private life, *A History of Private Life: the middle ages*, Vol II, transl A Goldhammer, Camb. (Mass.), (1988), pp. 3-31 but see the review article by J L Nelson, 'The problematic in the private', *Social History*, 15, (1990), pp. 355-64, where she argues that the category of 'private life' is unsustainable in the early medieval period.



family politics and Frankish and English queens has been the starting point for the new and gendered analysis of medieval royal families and the nature of politics and power.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the often frustrating nature of the evidence, either a simple lack of records relating to particular individuals, or the seemingly intractable misogyny and distortion of female experience offered in hostile ecclesiastical sources, historians have managed to piece together interpretations of aspects of medieval queenship in the early middle ages.<sup>4</sup> Recent historians of queenship and royal women have offered nuanced and sophisticated interpretations of varied aspects of the lives and experience of queens, including their patronage of learning and role in the transmission of knowledge and their vulnerability to sexual defamation and accusations of unchastity in royal courts. There have also been studies of queen-making through coronation rituals and the varying opportunities open to queens to influence succession strategies.<sup>5</sup> The greater abundance of evidence after the year

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<sup>3</sup> The festschrift for Rosalind Hill, *Medieval Women*, ed. D Baker (1978) contained key articles: J L Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels: the careers of Brunhild and Balthild', pp. 31-77; P Stafford, 'Sons and Mothers: family politics in the early middle ages', pp. 79-100; see *idem*, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: the King's wife in the early middle ages*, Athens, Georgia, (1983). Men have also made their contribution: Karl Leyser's work on the women of the Ottonian royal house in the 10<sup>th</sup> century should also be noted here as profoundly influential, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony*, London (1979).

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of recent work on medieval queenship see J L Nelson, 'Medieval Queenship', in *Women in Medieval Western European culture*, ed. L E Mitchell, New York and London, (1999), pp. 177-207; *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. A. Duggan, Woodbridge, (1997); *Medieval Queenship*, ed. J C Parsons, Stroud, (1994).

<sup>5</sup> What follows is a sample of research on these topics: learning and the transmission of knowledge: J L Nelson, 'Women and the Word in the earlier middle ages', in *idem*, *The Frankish World 750-900*, London (1996), pp. 199- 221; queen-making: J L Nelson, 'Early Medieval Rites of Queen-Making and the Shaping of Medieval Queenship', in *Queens and Queenship*, ed. Duggan, pp. 301-315; sexual politics and sexual defamation: G Buhner-Thierry, 'La reine adultère', *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 35, (1992) pp. 299-312; E Ward, 'Agobard of Lyons and Paschasius Radbertus as critics of the empress Judith', in *SCH* 27, (1990) pp.15-25; S Airlie, 'Private bodies and the body politic in the divorce case of Lothar II', in *Past*

1000 has also allowed detailed studies of individual queens: Pauline Stafford's comparative study of the eleventh-century English queens Emma and Edith, Margaret Howell's work on Eleanor of Provence and John Carmi Parsons's biography of Edward I's wife, Eleanor of Castile.<sup>6</sup> In the earlier period, especially in eighth and ninth century Europe where evidence has allowed, there have been briefer accounts of queenly careers: Janet Nelson's study of the Merovingian queens Brunhild and Balthild; Jane Hyam's work on Ermintrude and Richildis, the two successive queens of Charles the Bald.<sup>7</sup> More recently, collective biographies of Carolingian royal women, including queens, and the women of the Lombard royal family have been assembled by Janet Nelson who has reintegrated the careers of these women into the politics of their families.<sup>8</sup> But what has been lacking so far is a substantial study of a queen, comparable to biographies of kings or churchmen of the period, in the earlier middle ages.<sup>9</sup> Even in an period which yields relatively sparse sources for reconstructing a life history, and the problem is particularly acute when the subject is female, biography offers the opportunity to focus on a single individual and so place

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*and Present*, 161, (1998), pp. 3-38; succession strategies: Stafford, 'Sons and Mothers', as note 3;

<sup>6</sup> P Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith*; Oxford, (1997); J C Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile: Queen and society in thirteenth century England*, New York, (1995); M Howell, *Eleanor of Provence, queenship in thirteenth century England*, Oxford, (1998).

<sup>7</sup> Nelson, 'Brunhild and Balthild', as note 3; J Hyam, 'Ermintrude and Richildis', in *Court and Kingdom*, pp. 154-68.

<sup>8</sup> J L Nelson, 'Les reines carolingiennes', in *Femmes et Pouvoir dans le Haut Moyen Age*, eds. R Le Jan et al, Lille (1997); *idem*, 'Monstrous regiment', as note 1; *idem*, 'Making a difference in eighth century politics: the daughters of Desiderius', in *After Rome's Fall: narrators and sources of early medieval history*, ed. A C Murray, Toronto, (1999), pp. 171-90.

<sup>9</sup> L Weinrich, *Mönch, Graf und Rebell: Die Biographie eines Karolingers*, Lübeck and Hamburg (1963); E Boshof, *Erzbischof Agobard von Lyon. Leben und Werk*. Cologne and Vienna, (1969); B Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie: Die Biographie eines karolingischen politikers und Klostervorstehers*, (Studia Humaniora 3), Dusseldorf, (1986); J L Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, London, (1992).

a life in its family as well as its political context.<sup>10</sup> And a biography of a queen is doubly subversive of traditional historical categories, first because history is measured by the rhythms and concerns of the female life cycle, and secondly because it involves a different perspective on the politics of royal courts. In studying a queen and her queenship we arrive at a fuller understanding of kingship and royal power.

The subject of this study is the career of one queen, an empress, Judith the daughter of count Welf and Heilwig, who became the second wife of the Carolingian emperor Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's heir, at her marriage in February 819 in the imperial palace at Aachen. The marriage produced two children: first, a daughter Gisela and then on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 823 a son, Charles, named after his grandfather.<sup>11</sup> The reign of Louis the Pious (814-840) saw the transformation of Charlemagne's empire as Carolingian military expansion, the subjugation and exploitation of new *exterae gentes*, came to a halt. Yet the reign of Charlemagne's son saw 'no absence of war': Louis faced the challenges both of ruling Charlemagne's empire within static boundaries and of managing the aspirations of three adult sons, kings in their own right throughout most of the reign, and in competition with each other, and with their father, for political power and resources to maintain their own aristocratic followings.<sup>12</sup> The 817 settlement known as the *Ordinatio imperii*, a division of the Carolingian realms between Lothar, Pippin and Louis the German, his sons by his first wife Irmengard, was an attempt to resolve potential family conflict.<sup>13</sup> A further complication was that after 823 the legitimate sons of two different queens, Judith and her predecessor Irmengard, had claims on the Carolingian kingdoms. It is no surprise that Judith, a much younger second wife and mother of a fourth son, was at

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<sup>10</sup> S Hamilton, 'Early medieval rulers and their modern biographers', in *EME*, 9, (2000), pp. 247-60, especially 247-9.

<sup>11</sup> For the births of Gisela and Charles, see below, chapter 3.

<sup>12</sup> T Reuter, 'The end of Carolingian military expansion', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 391-408. The baptism of the Danish king Harold and his family at Ingelheim in 826, was, arguably, the high point of Carolingian expansion. See below, chapter 3.

<sup>13</sup> MGH Capit. I, no 136, p. 270f.



the centre of the two crises of the reign when Irmengard's adult sons rebelled in 830 and 833 and deposed their father, the emperor. Ninth-century sources offer vivid accounts of the accusations of adultery, incest and sorcery made against Judith by her stepsons. Here indeed was a queen who had made her mark.<sup>14</sup> Judith died barely three years after her husband at the monastery of St Martin, Tours on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 843, when she was probably just under forty years of age.

What distinguishes Judith's career from those of earlier Frankish queens is the wealth, richness and variety of contemporary material so that she is the first Carolingian queen for whom such a study can be attempted. We know very little about earlier women who married into the Carolingian family. Einhard's biography of Charlemagne, for example, is the major source for the careers of his wives, but is written in the reign of his son Louis the Pious. The problem is not that earlier Carolingian queens necessarily lacked significant political power or importance - although the institutional framework and ideology of Carolingian queenship developed considerably during the reign of Louis the Pious as this thesis will show - but that we lack the evidence for their endeavours. Occasionally, we can catch a glimpse of their activities. Charlemagne's mother Queen Bertrada was involved in diplomatic missions to cement relationships between the Franks and the Lombards<sup>15</sup>; Queen Fastrada, Charlemagne's Alemannian wife was entrusted with considerable royal authority whilst he was engaged in military campaigns east of the Rhine. Charlemagne's only surviving letter to Fastrada announced his victory over the Avars in September 791, directing her to have masses performed at Regensburg in celebration. Janet Nelson has suggested that a case preserved in an imperial formula

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<sup>14</sup> See below, chapters 4 and 6

<sup>15</sup> She may have played a role in constructing the marriage alliance with the Lombard king although this is controversial, see Nelson, 'Making a difference', pp. 178-81.

implies that Fastrada may have been acting as regent in Charlemagne's absence and on one occasion she may also have sat in judgement at court.<sup>16</sup>

It is, however, the reign of Louis the Pious that makes it possible to discuss queenship, the office and roles occupied by the queen, because they became important to contemporaries. During the political crises of the 830s we can overhear debates and discussions in the sources. Agobard, archbishop of Lyons, who wrote in support of the rebellion of Louis's son Lothar in the summer of 833 effectively questioned the nature of the queen's office in the royal household.<sup>17</sup> The argument of this thesis is that Judith's career is not only better documented than that of earlier queens but that the conditions were favourable in the reign of Louis the Pious for queenship to become established, however weakly, as an institution.<sup>18</sup> Judith's career is crucial within the development of Carolingian queenship.

Carolingian queens, and indeed the women of the Carolingian royal family, were recognized as important even before gender or queenship were the concerns of historians. The only detailed account of the reign of Louis the Pious remains Bernard von Simson's two-volume, *Jahrbücher*, published in 1874-6, in which he records, amongst much else, the activities of Carolingian women including the emperor's two wives.<sup>19</sup> Early in the twentieth century Sigmund Hellmann produced a detailed study

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<sup>16</sup> Nelson, 'Les reines', p. 127; *idem*, 'The siting of the council at Frankfort', *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794: Kristallisationspunkt karolingischer Kultur*, ed. R. Berndt, Mainz (1997), pp. 149-165, at 157-162.

<sup>17</sup> See below, chapter 6

<sup>18</sup> Queenship, as Janet Nelson insists, was always 'weakly institutionalised' in comparison to kingship, thus 'Medieval queenship', p. 205.

<sup>19</sup> *Jahrbücher des fränkischen Reichs unter Ludwig dem Frommen*, Leipzig, (1874-6), see index.

of the marriage strategies of the Carolingians.<sup>20</sup> It was nearly seventy-five years later that Hellmann's pioneering work was developed by Silvia Konecny in her key study of women of the Frankish royal families between the seventh and tenth centuries.<sup>21</sup> Suzanne Wemple's ambitious general survey of the experience of Frankish women between c.500-900 inevitably had a primary focus on Merovingian and Carolingian royal women.<sup>22</sup> Whilst these studies have made an important contribution in making royal women and queens visible, they have tended to assemble information and offer generalizations about female status rather than integrating these women into the politics of royal courts and families.

Judith's place, both in the general accounts of Carolingian women and the historiography of the reign of Louis the Pious has never been obscure. She has, moreover, the distinction of being considered a significant figure in the history of medieval Europe and German statehood: she is one of only a handful of individuals from the early middle ages identified in a modern history of Germany.<sup>23</sup> But to be noticed is not to be understood: Judith's influence on the course of German history has not been celebrated. Over the centuries historians have been remarkably consistent in their judgements of Charlemagne's heir and his second wife. In the twelfth century, the historian Otto of Freising summed up Louis the Pious as a weak king who was deposed on account of the evil deeds of his wife.<sup>24</sup> There has been the

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<sup>20</sup> S Hellmann, 'Die Heiraten der Karolinger', in his *Ausgewählte Abhandlungen zur Historiographie und Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. H Beumann, repr. Darmstadt (1961).

<sup>21</sup> S Konecny, *Die Frauen des Karolingischen Königshauses, die politische Bedeutung der Ehe und die Stellung der Frau in der frankischer Herrscher Familie vom 7 bis 10 Jahrhundert*, Vienna (1977)

<sup>22</sup> S F Wemple, *Women in Frankish society, marriage and the cloister 500-900*, Philadelphia (1981).

<sup>23</sup> See for example, M Kitchen, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Germany*, Cambridge, (1996), p. 29.

<sup>24</sup> Otto of Freising, *Chronica*, ed. A Hofmeister, MGH SRG, 45, Lib. V, cap. 35, p.259.



occasional exception to this condemnation of Judith's role in Carolingian history. The operatic stage has allowed an alternative representation of the reign. The libretto by Roberto Gigli for the 1687 Italian opera *Lodovico Pio* shows us a different historical tradition where in the finale of the opera the emperor is reconciled to his son Lothar and Judith is embraced by her stepson.<sup>25</sup> In the nineteenth century with the development of a history based on primary sources Judith, was to re-emerge in an equally dramatic role.

Nineteenth-century German historians credited Judith with responsibility for the destruction of Charlemagne's empire and thus, by extension, the failure of German statehood. This was essentially the view of the great German scholar and editor of the *Monumenta*, Ernst Dümmler, and his judgement was to be handed down in both German and Francophone historiography largely unchallenged. For Dümmler the reign of Louis the Pious was a disastrous period for the Carolingian empire; Louis was a tragic and pathetic figure twice deposed by his sons, whose rule culminated, three years after his death, in the dismemberment of the Carolingian empire at the treaty of Verdun in 843. Judith's crime, particularly in the eyes of German historians of the nineteenth century, was that she persuaded her husband to vary the succession arrangements of 817 which would, allegedly, have guaranteed the survival of a unitary Carolingian state, in favour of her own son, Charles the Bald. Caring little for the welfare of the empire, Judith, so Dümmler argued, exerted her considerable influence and sexual charm over her older husband to bend him to her will. Thus the empire of Charlemagne failed to survive as a viable political unit, not through intrinsic problems of structure, political stability, ethnic diversity, competition amongst the Frankish aristocracy for political power and scarce resources, or Viking raids, but because of the womanly wiles of a wicked stepmother. Dümmler, thus characterised her motivation in promoting her son's interests as peculiarly feminine: that is emotional and self-interested with no thought for the public good, or the ideal of imperial unity.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> G Gigli, *Lodovico Pio*, Sienna, (1687), Act III, *scena ultima*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>26</sup> E Dümmler, *Geschichte des Ostfränkischen reiches*, 2 vols, Berlin, (1862-64); 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 3 vols., Leipzig, (1887-88), unless otherwise stated all references are to the

These gendered judgements held sway for more than a century. Both Simson and then Mühlbacher followed Dümmler's line, although with varying degrees of enthusiasm, and the prevailing negative continental historiography can be seen summarised in 1922 by Louis Poupardin in the *Cambridge Medieval History*.<sup>27</sup> In the 1950s Theodor Schieffer adopted a more dispassionate tone but essentially shared Dümmler's view.<sup>28</sup> Francophone historiography, where it took notice of the reign of Louis the Pious, developed along similar lines, although Louis Halphen cautioned against seeing Judith as the *éminence grise* of the reign.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the wealth of narrative sources for the reign, (albeit a complete edition of the imperial diplomas was and remains lacking), Louis the Pious remained relatively unstudied by historians arguably because the appropriate focus remained Charlemagne and imperial unity. In the last twenty years historians have moved away from a preoccupation with the *Reichseinheitsidee*. The reign of Louis the Pious is no longer interpreted as a failure or catastrophe for the 'imperial project' of Charlemagne. The international conference held at Oxford in 1986, the proceedings of which were published in 1990 as *Charlemagne's Heir*, demonstrates a shift from

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second edition. There are many references to Louis and Judith which can most profitably be found in the comprehensive index. For more explicit examples of Dümmler's thought as summarized in this paragraph see *ibid.*, vol I, pp.41-46, 49, 53f., 66f., II, p.188.

<sup>27</sup> E Mühlbacher, *Deutsche Geschichte unter den Karolingern*, Stuttgart, (1896), p.371; Rene Poupardin, 'Louis the Pious' in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, Cambridge, (1922) iii, especially pp. 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> T Schieffer, 'Die Krise des karolingischen Imperiums', in *Aus Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Festschrift für G. Kallen*, eds., J. Engel and H.M. Klinkenberg, Bonn, (1957), pp. 1-15, see also H Fichtenau, *Das karolingische Imperium*, Zurich, (1947), pp. 237ff., 287.

<sup>29</sup> F L Ganshof, in F Lot, C Pfister and F L Ganshof, *Les Destinées de l'empire en Occident de 395 à 888*, Paris (1928) pp. 473-90, at p. 504; J Calmette, *L'Effondrement d'un empire et la naissance d'une Europe*, Paris, (1941); L Halphen, *Charlemagne et l'empire carolingien*, Paris, (1947); P Riché, *Les Carolingiens. Une famille qui fit l'Europe*, Paris, (1983) pp. 152-60.

the catastrophist approach of the nineteenth century and that the reign is now deemed worthy of study in its own right.<sup>30</sup> This has meant that Judith has emerged from the heavy shadow of historical culpability for the 'disaster' that was the traditional verdict on the reign. The study of family politics and queenship over the last twenty years has provided a framework within which Judith can be placed. I have reassessed Judith's involvement in politics in the 820s and evaluated the criticisms of Judith by two Frankish churchmen, Agobard of Lyons and Paschasius Radbertus,<sup>31</sup> whilst Philippe Depreux's recent prosopography of the household of Louis the Pious has a substantial entry on Judith, thus acknowledging her importance in political relationships in the palace.<sup>32</sup>

Feminist historians have, rightly, insisted on a history of women which privileges the voices of women themselves. This creates problems for the early middle ages because of the random survival and comparative scarcity of evidence for the lives of women, even queens. A ninth-century historian can only envy the wealth of detail available to historians such as Amanda Foreman and Amanda Vickery which enables the reconstruction of female experience in eighteenth-century England<sup>33</sup>. The problems of reconstructing the experience of a queen from sparse and often hostile ecclesiastical sources have already been alluded to and form a consistent theme in this study. Yet despite all these problems, there is enough evidence which allows us

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<sup>30</sup> *Charlemagne's Heir: new perspectives on the reign of Louis the Pious*, eds. P Godman and R Collins, Oxford, (1990).

<sup>31</sup> E Ward, 'Caesar's Wife: the career of the empress Judith, 819-829', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 205-227; *idem*, 'Agobard and Paschasius', as note 5. An earlier study of Judith's career, although largely narrative, was made by J A Cabaniss, 'Judith Augusta and her time', *Studies in English*, 10, (1969), pp. 67-109; in 1961 he reported that a PhD student at the University of Chicago, Mrs Bernhard Fischer had embarked on a study of Judith's career but if it was completed it has never appeared in print, *idem*, *Son of Charlemagne*, p. 156

<sup>32</sup> P Depreux, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux, 781-840*, Sigmaringen, (1997), pp. 279-86.

<sup>33</sup> A Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, London (1998); A Vickery, *The Gentleman's daughter*, New Haven, Conn., (1998).



to find Judith as queen and empress, albeit in many different guises and representations, in the reign of Louis the Pious.<sup>34</sup>

I turn now to review briefly the key groups of sources for Judith's career, namely narrative sources including biographies of Louis the Pious, palace-based annals and Nithard's history; rhetorical texts; and the imperial diplomas. Other sources such as letters, poetry, and minor annals will be addressed in the text.

The reign of Louis the Pious stimulated the writing of contemporary history in many different forms including annals and biographies.<sup>35</sup> Royal annals were written in the palace by chaplains and were kept continuously throughout the reign, they provide evidence of the itinerary of the royal household, the yearly rhythm of assemblies and military campaigns and the reception of foreign embassies and visitors.<sup>36</sup> Louis's queens are rarely mentioned except to record marriages and deaths. Frustratingly then, royal annals were a product of the palace but do not offer a record of palace life where the queen was central. Where the focus of a source shifts to take in the concerns of the court or relationships within the royal family then, necessarily, Judith comes into view.

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<sup>34</sup> See Pauline Stafford's remarks on the difficulties of studying queens and the interaction between sources and images, *Queens*, pp. 1-31, especially 24-31; Matthew Innes elegantly summarises contemporary historical awareness of the constructedness of texts in his, 'Introduction: Using the Past, interpreting the Present, influencing the Future', in, *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Y Hen and M Innes, Cambridge, (2000), pp. 1-9.

<sup>35</sup> M Innes and R McKitterick, 'The writing of history', in *Carolingian culture: emulation and innovation*, ed. R McKitterick, Cambridge, (1994), pp. 193-220, especially 209-214.

<sup>36</sup> *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed., F Kurze, MGH SRG, Hanover, (1895); R McKitterick, 'Constructing the past in the early middle ages: the case of the Royal Frankish Annals', *TRHS*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, (1997), pp. 101-29, especially pp. 115-117; *Annales Bertiniani*, eds., F Grat, J Vielliard and S Clemencet, *Annales de Saint Bertin*, Paris, (1964). English translation, JL Nelson, *The Annals of St Bertin: ninth-century histories*, vol I, Manchester, (1991); JL Nelson, 'The Annals of St Bertin,' in *idem, Politics and Ritual*, London, (1986), pp. 173-194.

There are three biographies of Louis the Pious, two of them written during the reign, and all offer very different representations of the emperor and therefore of Judith. First, Ermold's verse biography, written c.827, where Louis is a heroic and victorious war-leader and the model of a benign, Christian ruler. Ermold wrote from exile in Strasbourg and intended his praise poem in honour of the emperor to effect his political restoration. Ermold's focus is very court-oriented which means that both of Louis's queens have high visibility: for example, Ermold's presentation of the religious and secular rituals surrounding the baptism of the Danish king and queen at Ingelheim in 826 offers vignettes of Judith in the palace.<sup>37</sup> Thegan's biography, written probably in the summer of 837, has very different concerns which allow minimal focus on the royal palace; however, his interest in genealogy and fine gradations of social status makes him a crucial source for the origin of Judith's family.<sup>38</sup> The anonymous *Life* of the emperor, whose author is known to historians as the Astronomer, was written c.841. Ernst Tremp has suggested that it was prepared for Lothar in the winter of 840, following the death of the old emperor and then, after Lothar's defeat at Fontenoy in June 841, offered instead to Charles the Bald.<sup>39</sup> The Astronomer, unlike Thegan, was a *palatinus*: he also worked from a copy of the palace annals up to 835 to provide his basic chronology of the reign. The *Life* provides what may have been an eye-witness account of Judith's experience during the chaos of Pippin's coup in 830 when she had to flee Aachen, and also recounts Judith's alliances with *palatini* in the late 830s. Nithard's history of the sons of Louis the Pious was also begun in 841 at the request of Judith's son Charles the Bald. Nithard, himself a member of the Carolingian royal family, was an insider in the

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<sup>37</sup> Ermold, *In honorem Hludowici*, ed. and trans, E. Faral, Ermold le Noir, *Poème sur Louis le Pieux et épîtres au roi Pépin*, Paris (1932), see below, chapter 3.

<sup>38</sup> Theganus, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. E. Tremp, MGH, SRG, LXIV, Hanover, (1995); E Tremp, *Studien zu dem Gesta Hludowici imperatoris des Trierer Chorbischofs Thegan*, Hanover, (1988) pp. 19-21.

<sup>39</sup> Astronomus, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. E. Tremp, MGH, SRG, LXIV, Hanover, (1995); E Tremp, *Die Überlieferung der Vita Hludowici imperatoris des Astronomus*, Hannover, (1991), pp. 128-56, especially p. 138.



ways of the court and how politics was conducted there. Writing during the fraternal civil war which followed the death of Louis the Pious, his original brief from Charles was to give the correct version of the political crises of his father's reign and to reveal the roots of present family conflict.<sup>40</sup> Judith is prominent politically in these two sources written circa 841, a time when she was actively involved in supporting her son Charles the Bald to win his inheritance.

There is however, one minor narrative source which has Judith at its centre, namely the final entry, covering the years 830-31 of the annals which are known by historians as the *Annales Mettenses Priores*.<sup>41</sup> The 830 annal, which amounts to a mini-biography of Judith's life up to and including her imprisonment in 830 and triumphant restoration to the palace in 831, is an appendage to a series of annals which recount the fortunes of the Carolingian house to 805. Where the first section of annals finish in 805 the manuscript continues with a copy of the *Royal Frankish Annals* to 'fill in' the years 806-829. The authorship and place of composition of the Metz annals has been debated: the subject of the text points to production in a royal house and both Metz itself, and St Denis, have been proposed.<sup>42</sup> But the female royal monastery of Chelles, founded by Queen Balthild, has a good case.<sup>43</sup> Janet

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<sup>40</sup> Nithard, *Histoire des fils de Loius le Pieux*, ed. P Lauer, Paris, (1926), II, cap. 10, p. 76. For Nithard's political career, see JL Nelson, 'Public "Histories" and Private History in the Work of Nithard', *Speculum*, 60 (1985) pp. 251-93 and chapter 8, below.

<sup>41</sup> *Annales Mettenses Priores*, ed., B von Simson, MGH SRG, Hanover and Leipzig, (1905).

<sup>42</sup> Metz: Simson, *ibid*, pp. vx-xvi; P Fouracre and R Geberding reject the possibility of female authorship on the grounds that the annals contain anti-feminine references, *Late Merovingian France*, Manchester, (1996), pp. 339-40 but see R Mckitterick, 'Political ideology in Carolingian historiography', in *Uses of the Past*, eds. Hen and Innes, pp. 162-174, at 166-67 where she makes the point that criticism of women is not the sole preserve of men. St Denis: J M Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, Oxford, (1983), p. 141. For a recent review of nearly a century of historiography see Y Hen, 'The annals of Metz and the Merovingian past', in *The Uses of the Past*, pp. 175- 190, at pp. 175-77, with notes 2-10.

Nelson has argued, convincingly, that the earlier annals were written at Chelles, circa 805, under the direction of Gisela, sister of Charelemagne. Chelles is certainly a strong contender: the house is itself mentioned twice, it had a scriptorium and abbess Gisela had a particular interest in the construction and promotion of a Carolingian family history and not least in the women who played a key role in the success of the dynasty. If the earlier annals were composed at Chelles then it seems likely that the later 830 annal was written there too, under the auspices of Judith's mother, abbess Heilwig.<sup>44</sup>

The negative judgements of Judith in traditional historiography can certainly be explained in terms of the sexism of historians but they have also been based on a literal reading of two works by Carolingian churchmen: the *Libri Apologetici* <sup>45</sup> of archbishop Agobard of Lyons written in support of Lothar during the crisis of 833 and the *Epitaphium Arsenii*, a justificatory biography of a controversial abbot of Corbie, Wala, produced by his successor Radbert in the mid 850s.<sup>46</sup> The views of Agobard and Radbert of Judith as an adulterous queen, has coloured her representation by historians. Indeed a political narrative for this period can be constructed by interweaving vivid passages and comment from both writers.<sup>47</sup> But such an interleaving of the *LA* and *Epitaphium* creates problems. The different contexts in which both men wrote, and the complexity of their arguments, are lost. The intellectual positions adopted by Agobard and Radbert are only superficially

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<sup>43</sup> I Haselbach *Aufstieg und Herrschaft der Karlinger in der darstellung desogenannten Annales Mettenses priores*, Lübeck and Hamburg, (1970); H Hoffmann, *Untersuchungen zur karolingischen Annalistik*, Bonner Historische Forschungen, (1958).

<sup>44</sup> See Nelson, 'Genre and Gender', pp. 191-94, especially at p. 194.

<sup>45</sup> *Libri Apologetici*, in his *Opera omnia*, ed., L van Acker, CCCM, 52, (1981).

<sup>46</sup> *Epitaphium Arsenii*, ed., E Dümmler, *Abhandlungen der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, phil.-hist. Klasse, Berlin (1900).

<sup>47</sup> See Halphen, *L'empire*, pp 268-95.

similar. They share anti-feminine metaphors and images - they both plunder the same treasure house of biblical imagery in the Old Testament - but their attitudes to women and power, to Judith's queenship, as revealed in these texts are profoundly different.<sup>48</sup> Radbert maintained that '*vis feminea*' was the enemy of virtue<sup>49</sup>; Agobard criticised Judith but at the same time upheld a notion of queenly office.<sup>50</sup> Agobard's texts are analysed in detail in chapter 6.

Radbert's *Epitaphium*, as David Ganz has shown, is a rich and fascinating text for the study of a monastic community, Corbie, and the construction of a collective memory of its leaders and their conflict with royal authority in the mid-ninth century.<sup>51</sup> It is however, of limited use for the reconstruction of Judith's career and biography.<sup>52</sup> Radbert wrote with hindsight, in the knowledge that the rebellions of 830 and 833 had not succeeded. The *Epitaphium Arsenii* was written in 856 as a defence of a controversial abbot who had been a key figure in the rebellions of 830 and 833. Wala's biography is presented in two books. The first traces Wala's early life and career to 828 and the second examines the most controversial period of his life from 828 to his death in exile at Bobbio in 836. The *Epitaphium* is unlike any other ninth-century biography: Radbert chose the form of a Socratic dialogue conducted amongst the community at Corbie to present Wala's life and ideas. Furthermore almost all persons portrayed, both living and dead, are given pseudonyms.<sup>53</sup> Speakers in the

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<sup>48</sup> Ward, 'Agobard and Paschasius', see note 5.p. 15-25.

<sup>49</sup> *Epitaphium* II, cap. 7, p. 68.

<sup>50</sup> See below, chapter 6.

<sup>51</sup> My critique of the *Epitaphium*, is based on the reinterpretation of this text by D Ganz, 'The *Epitaphium Arsenii* and Opposition to Louis the Pious', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 537-550; see also H Mayr-Harting, 'Two abbots in politics: Wala of Corbie and Bernard of Clairvaux, *TRHS*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 40, (1990), pp. 217-37.

<sup>52</sup> Ward, 'Agobard and Paschasius', pp. 21-25.

<sup>53</sup> There are exceptions, both Pope Eugenius and Lothar's wife Irmengard, who is characterised as 'pious', appear under their own names: *Epitaphium*, I, cap. 28, p. 58; II, cap 24, p. 97.



dialogue include Radbert himself as 'Paschasius'; other participants have been identified from the statutes of the house as monks of Corbie. 'Arsenius', the name used for Wala, was tutor to the children of Theoderic. Louis the Pious is 'Justinianus', Judith is 'Justina'. Why did he choose 'Justina'? The fourth-century saint of the same name can be easily eliminated<sup>54</sup>. Radbert may have arrived at 'Justina' from his use of 'Justinianus' for the emperor. Yet the analogy is not exact; the feminine form of 'Justinianus' should be 'Justiniana' and if Radbert intended a reference to the wife of the sixth-century Byzantine emperor then he could have used 'Theodora'. Weinrich suggested an identification with Justina, second wife of the emperor Valentinian II who, like Judith, was renowned for her beauty. Justina may have been Radbert's choice as the Arian wife of a catholic emperor and involved in bitter disputes with Saint Ambrose. The clash between an heretical empress and saint, between secular power and the authority of the church would have lent itself very well to a similar clash of empress and outspoken churchman in the *Epitaphium*.<sup>55</sup> But whatever the implications in Radbert's choice, the use of the pseudonym Justina for Judith distracted attention from the connotations of her own name. The biblical Judith, saviour of her people, was a personification of justice and chastity. By casting Judith as 'Justina' Radbert escaped from this positive typology and was then able to fashion her to his purpose as the antithesis of justice and chastity. The significance of Judith's name is a theme I will return to. Bernard, the chamberlain and Judith's alleged lover, is 'Naso', probably a reference to the poet Ovidius Naso, lover of Julia, daughter of the emperor Augustus.<sup>56</sup> Beyond this system of classical names Radbert also presented Wala as a 'second Jeremiah'; a turbulent and angry prophet who had spoken out against impious kings and castigated Israel for her harlotry only to suffer exile and obloquy for his truth-telling.

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<sup>54</sup> See Cyprian, in *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. F L Cross and E A Livingstone, Oxford, (1977) p. 442.

<sup>55</sup> Weinrich, *Wala*, p. 9; Ganz, '*Epitaphium*', p. 541

<sup>56</sup> Ganz, '*Epitaphium*', p. 542.

The strangeness of this text has not gone unnoticed and has given rise to unease amongst the few historians who have considered it: Dümmler, who prepared an edition of the text, for example, balked at Radbert's wilder claims about Judith. Justina's almost supernatural powers over the will of Justinianus and her supposed complicity in Naso's plot to murder the emperor gave the great scholar pause because neither of these charges is in any way corroborated in other sources. Unfortunately, Dümmler was not inclined to reject Radbert's claim. He was put in mind of another triangle of adulterous queen, her lover and husband. The belief that Mary Stuart and her lover Bothwell were responsible for the death of her husband Darnley was offered by Dümmler as a modern historical comparison.<sup>57</sup>

The *Epitaphium* has been used as a central text for the events of 830 and the motivations of the principal rebels. A particular rationale for the rebellions of 830 and 833 in the predominantly religious terms of *Reichseinheit* can be constructed from a reading of the *Epitaphium*. Secondly, Radbert's portrayal of Judith as adulterous queen, the dominating wife, and in the last years of Wala's life, the cruel persecutor of a holy man, was acceptable to historians, because it fitted with a construction of Louis the Pious as a weak ruler and his reign as a failure. But ultimately the *Epitaphium* was held to have a particular reliability as a source for the events of 830-834. Radbert claimed that book II of the *Epitaphium* which covers the years after 828 was written at a moment when 'the truth' about the rebellion could at last be told.<sup>58</sup> Radbert's 'truth' about Judith is deeply suspicious. More recent work on the *Epitaphium* by David Ganz has undermined the traditional place of Radbert's work as a major source of reliable evidence for Judith's career. Ganz has argued persuasively against the over-literal interpretation of the *Epitaphium* as 'a quarry for facts' about Wala's career.<sup>59</sup> He proposed that the *Epitaphium* should be understood as one, coherent theological text written circa 856 and at a time when Radbert was engaged in a prolonged dispute with Charles the Bald. The difference of content

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<sup>57</sup> *Epitaphium*, p. 14.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, II, cap. 1, pp. 60-61 .

<sup>59</sup> Ganz, '*Epitaphium*', p. 538.

between Books I and II is explicable in terms of style and literary borrowings. At issue in the *Epitaphium* is an interpretation of recent history to fulfill the needs of Corbie in a present, the 850s, when the house felt once more at odds with royal authority. Radbert's *Epitaphium* is certainly a rich source for female imagery and the symbolic representation and manipulation of a particular queen. Women, especially dead queens, are indeed very 'good to think with' and the *Epitaphium* is a powerful example of this. It has, however, limited use as evidence for reconstructing Judith's career.

Moving from the highly coloured and allusive world of Agobard and Radbert's thought and writing, we turn to find Judith in the more solid and mundane texts, the 'bread and butter' of Carolingian government, namely the diplomas. The diplomas have long been acknowledged as an important source for the reign and form the chronological backbone of Carolingian history in the work of Dümmler, Simson and Böhmer. The imperial itinerary, the distribution of patronage and the identification of holders of land and privilege can be pieced together from these documents. But it is the identification of the individuals who request them that is of particular interest. These are the intercessors or *ambasciatores*. It is through the study of the *ambasciatores*, especially those who act, like Guntbald, as patrons for a third party, that, as Jörgen Hannig argued in *Consensus Fidelium*, we can identify changing patterns of personal influence and political groupings in the household of Louis the Pious.<sup>60</sup>

Although the diplomas are acknowledged as a crucial source for the reign there is no complete modern edition available to scholars. The diplomas of other Carolingian rulers, including Charlemagne and, most recently, the emperor Lothar I, have been published in the *MGH* series. The deficiency for Louis the Pious could almost be read as a metaphor for historians' traditional neglect of the reign. The situation is being rectified. Peter Johannek is preparing the first complete edition of Louis's

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<sup>60</sup> J Hannig, *Consensus Fidelium, frühfeudale Interpretationen des Verhältnisses von Königtum und Adel am Beispiel des Frankenreiches*, Stuttgart, (1982), p. 93.



diplomas for the *MGH*.<sup>61</sup> Until this edition is published historians have to study the diplomas primarily through the 1856 compilation of Theodor Sickel and in regional collections of charters and royal documents.<sup>62</sup> Sickel's edition consists of extracts or *epitomes* rather than full transcriptions of the diplomas, although he does provide a detailed scholarly apparatus. Johannek's research for the first complete edition of the diplomas has uncovered new material, in the light of over a century of historical research. It is probable that some of Sickel's conclusions, for example on dating and provenance, will be challenged and revised. In the interim all comments on this evidence are provisional. But whatever the impact of the *MGH* edition on our knowledge and understanding of the reign and on Judith's career, there are specific problems raised by the diplomas as a category of evidence which need to be addressed. The diplomatic evidence is slippery too.

The first problem is the random survival of the diplomas themselves. Sickel identified nearly 350 diplomas for Louis's reign but we know from other evidence and later diplomas that this is not the total issued. Judith's patronage demonstrates the gaps in the evidence. Sickel offers six cases where Judith acted as an intermediary or *ambasciator*.<sup>63</sup> However we also know that it was through Judith's patronage that Ferrières obtained the diploma which granted St. Judoc to the monastery, and that she also obtained a toll privilege for Fulda at Durestad, although the actual grants are no longer extant. There is a related problem here too, that not all the diplomas contain evidence of an *ambasciator*. When diplomas were later transcribed into cartularies scribes had no particular reason to preserve the name of a long dead intercessor or, more likely, were unable to decipher the Tironian note which recorded this information. Thus a Tironian note, interpreted by Jusselin, records that the archchaplain Fulco's intercession on behalf of the community of St Colombe, Sens in June 833 where the emperor confirmed their privilege of

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<sup>61</sup> 'Probleme einer zukünftigen Editionen der Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 409-24.

<sup>62</sup> T Sickel, *Regesten der Urkunden der ersten Karolinger 751-840*, Vienna (1867).

<sup>63</sup> For her patronage of Ferrières and Fulda, see below, chapter 7.

immunity, was in fact jointly requested with the empress.<sup>64</sup> Where original diplomas survive there is an increased chance of identifying *ambasciatores*. Ironically none of the diplomas which reveal Judith as an *ambasciator* is an original.

The geographical and chronological distribution of diplomas through the reign is also uneven. Just over half the diplomas can be dated to the 830s and this is also the period when there is most evidence for Judith's political activity. As one would expect there is a preponderance of diplomas in favour of the great monastic houses such as St Denis and St Martin. The survival of the original diplomas and charters of St Gall, the largest body of documents from any ecclesiastical community in the ninth century, also skews the picture.<sup>65</sup> Despite these problems, the diplomas are a crucial category of evidence for Judith's career because they serve as a foil to the images of the 'soft' literary material. They provide an opportunity to move away from the malleable Judith who is mediated largely through stereotypes in the writings of churchmen. The diplomas offer the prospect of a 'harder', more reliable kind of evidence, records of a reality of concrete transactions, that is, the transfer of named resources to specific individuals and, where dated, at a precise chronological moment in an exact location. Judith acts in a formal capacity within these transactions providing us with crucial evidence of her role as political patron. This is the officially documented exercise of legitimate political activity.

These documents contain their own interpretative problems and ambiguities. Other informal, more hidden interactions surely lie beneath them. The diploma is a relic, the solid remains of the intangible negotiations, alliances and relationships that culminated in the issue of the diploma. We know next to nothing about the procedure

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<sup>64</sup> Cited in Depreux, *Prosopographie*, p. 286 with note 70. I came upon this reference at a late stage in writing and have been unable to integrate this evidence fully into the present study.

<sup>65</sup> H Wartmann, *Urkundenbuch der Abtei St Gallen* I and II (790-920), Zurich, (1863); on the importance of the St Gall charters see R McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the written word*, Cambridge, (1989), pp. 79- 81



by which an intercessor was approached or the diploma actually requested and then drawn up.<sup>66</sup>

Who, then, were *ambasciatores*? The first point to make is that these power-brokers were almost invariably men, reflecting the gender distribution of formal power in the royal household. In the 820s they were *palatini* such as Hugh and Matfred, Hilduin of St. Denis and other churchmen.<sup>67</sup> The only women who request diplomas are royal women but they act infrequently and usually on behalf of their monastic foundation. Louis's sister Theodorada, for example, requested a diploma on behalf of her convent at Argenteuil.<sup>68</sup> The only lay woman to act as intercessor in diplomas is the queen. The reign of Louis the Pious provides the first evidence. There is one surviving diploma where Louis's first wife Irmengard appears in this capacity; it is dated August 818 and is a confirmation of an earlier grant of land in the names of both Louis and Irmengard to the monastery of St Anthony.<sup>69</sup> Judith is the first queen for whom there is evidence of any significance; she appears on six occasions in this capacity and four of these diplomas can be dated between the recovery of power in 830 and the capture of the emperor and empress at Rotfeld in July 833. Judith is also the *ambasciator* for whom there is most evidence and yet perhaps this should not be surprising. The empress was one of the few individuals continuously at court throughout the reign.

Judith did not continue in this role after Louis's death in June 840: there is no surviving evidence of Judith's intercession in the reign of her son Charles the Bald in the three years 840 -843.

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<sup>66</sup> McKitterick takes a pragmatic approach based on context and a detailed analysis of charter structure for the local St Gall charters yet even this rich material does not offer a contemporary description of the process by which a charter was negotiated and then drawn up, *ibid*, pp. 90-98, especially at p. 95.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, the following group of diplomas: Sickel, L213, L215 p. 148; L217, p. 149

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, L266, p. 165.

<sup>69</sup> See chapter 1, at note 3.

Finally, I want to consider a text, hitherto overlooked, that both individuates Judith and enables an exploration of her identity, and that is her given name: Judith. Names were significant badges and labels of family identity and kinship. The Carolingian royal family had its own pool of names e.g. Louis, Charles, Lothar, Pippin and these names were not found among the Frankish aristocracy. The seeming modernity of the name Judith obscures its extraordinary power and religious significance for contemporaries. Biblical personal names were not common in the eighth and ninth century amongst the Frankish laity. The best known examples are from churchmen such as bishops Jonas of Orleans and Jesse of Amiens, or Helichasar/Lazarus the archchancellor in the 820s but these were names probably taken as a sign of conversion to the religious life or on the assumption of high ecclesiastical office. The grand-daughter of Louis the Pious, Susanna, is a rare example of a Frankish noblewoman named from the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>70</sup> Judith's name is unusual enough to warrant some consideration. There is no earlier or contemporary example of a woman who shared the name of the biblical Judith, the chaste widow of Bethuliah, who saved her people by executing the general Holofernes as he lay in a drunken stupor in his own bed.

First, the name was surely chosen by her parents, Welf and Heilwig. This gives us an insight into the possible religious atmosphere of the aristocratic household and family life Judith grew up in. In particular, it may say something about Heilwig's piety and engagement with Christian scholarship and values. The naming of girls after biblical women may represent a new form and level of christianisation and from the mid-eighth century seems to occur both east and west of the Rhine.<sup>71</sup> The story of the biblical Judith, who defended her people and her chastity against male aggression and

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<sup>70</sup> Susanna was the daughter of Alpais and Bego, see K F Werner, 'Die Nachkommen Karls des Grossen bis um Jahr 1000', in *Karl der Grosse*, IV, ed. W Braunsfels, Dusseldorf, (1967), pp. 403-79, at pp. 445-6, 448.

<sup>71</sup> Here are two examples from east of the Rhine in the eighth century: Rachel, daughter of Cancor, founder of Lorsch and sister of Heimerich, K. Glockner ed, *Codex Laureshamensis*, I, no 1 (764), Darmstadt (1929) ; Elisabeth, sister of Lantswind and Geilrada, daughter of Odacer, Fulda charter no 63 (779), ed. E-F Droncke, *Traditiones et Antiquitates Fuldenses*, Fulda, (1844). I am grateful to Janet Nelson for providing me with these references.

lust, may have also have been especially appealing to women. What kind of impact did this awareness of her name have on a young woman's self-identity and how she imagined herself particularly once she became queen: it was surely impossible not to be aware of the meaning and theological resonance of such a personal name. A young Alemannian scholar at Aachen, Judith's protégé, reminded her in 829, 'You were not named Judith in vain'.<sup>72</sup> The limitations of the evidence means that we can only speculate about the extent to which Judith, and indeed Louis the Pious, responded to the images and models of behaviour they were offered. But we know of course that respond they did. And this is part of the challenge for the historian; the search for an individual whose life and experiences are diffused and obscured through the constructedness of texts in all their bias, distortion and intractability. I cannot offer an empirical account of Judith and Carolingian queenship and such an enterprise would be misconceived, however, whilst acknowledging the complexity and difficulties posed by the sources, it is possible to find and examine her life in all its contexts.

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<sup>72</sup> See chapter 3, at note 91.

## Chapter 1

### The two wives of Louis the Pious: Irmengard and Judith Oct. 818 - Feb. 819

In the middle of August 818, Louis the Pious, his wife Irmengard and the royal household moved to Angers in Aquitaine. In September, at Vannes, he assembled the army for his campaign against the Bretons, Irmengard remained in Angers perhaps already ill with a fever. When the emperor returned to Aquitaine on the first of October he found his wife close to death: Irmengard died two days later. Louis the Pious buried the empress at Angers where she had died.<sup>1</sup> The evidence for Irmengard's career is sparse, a reminder of just how little is known about most queens and aristocratic women in the early middle ages. We know something about the empress's family, especially her male kin, who had a history of service to the Carolingians: her father was count Ingram, nephew of Chrodegang bishop of Metz. The family also had connections in Aquitaine and Charlemagne had presumably chosen her as wife for Louis to strengthen his son's ties with the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> She was a patron of Benedict of Aniane and had sufficient rights over St. Menat, Avenay, to be able to grant it to his community. There is one extant diploma in which she acted as an intercessor on behalf of St. Anthony, Rovergne.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BM2 667b; *ARF* an 818, pp. 148-9; Thegan, cap. 23, p. 214; Astron, cap. 31, p. 388. See also Simson, *Jahrbücher*, pp. 137-8; Stafford, *Queens*, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Thegan, cap. 3, pp. 178-80; K F Werner identifies Ingram as a member of the Robertine family, 'Bedeutende Adelsfamilien in Reich Karls des Grossen', in *Karl der Grosse*, vol I, pp. 137-202, at p. 119 with notes 133-4; J Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige*, i. *Grundlegung die Karolingische Hofkapelle*, MGH Schriften, 16.1, Stuttgart (1959) pp. 48-9.

<sup>3</sup> Ardo, *Vita Benedicti*, ed. G Waitz, MGH SS 15, cap. 31, pp. 213-4; Sickel, L126, p. 121 and L355, p. 194.



Irmengard had however fulfilled the primary obligation of a royal wife: she had given the emperor three sons Lothar, Pippin and the young Louis.

The relative invisibility of Irmengard in the sources in comparison to the abundance of material for Judith's career has been noted with approval by some male historians: here was a Carolingian queen who knew her place. Irmengard has been hailed as a model queen: a pious and virtuous wife, a fertile mother content to rule over the nursery and, above all, to remain a silent spectator on the political sidelines.<sup>4</sup> This ideal of the good wife is more descriptive of the nineteenth-century middle class household than the ninth-century Carolingian palace. Such a view of Irmengard is also profoundly misleading because it overlooks evidence which suggests that she was no passive observer of politics within the royal family. Judith's career is certainly better documented but it does not present an isolated example of the political importance of a Carolingian queen.

The royal palace was the political centre of the kingdom where access to the king was access to patronage and political power. This was also the queen's milieu. There is enough evidence to suggest that by the early ninth century the queen, *ex officio*, had some formal powers in the organisation of the itinerant royal household. Charlemagne's capitulary *de villis* gave the queen powers to intervene in the management of royal estates and envisaged that she had her own officials, *ministri*, who acted on her behalf. The queen's *ministeriales* are also mentioned in a capitulary, issued circa 819, regulating the administration of the palace at Aachen.<sup>5</sup> There is also consistent evidence linking

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<sup>4</sup> Thus J Calmette, *L'Effondrement d'un Empire et la Naissance d'une Europe*, Paris (1941), pp. 26, 30; Dümmler, *Geschichte*, I, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> *De villis*, MGH Capit. I, no 32, pp. 83-91, cap. 16, p. 84, cap. 47, p. 87 ; *De disciplina palatii Aquisgranensis*, no 146, pp. 297-8, 298. See the comments of K F Werner,

Frankish queens with the education and oversight, albeit jointly with the king, of the young noblemen who lived in the royal household. Benedict of Aniane, for example, had learned the importance of a queen's patronage and her position in the *aula regis* when as a young man embarking on the career of the secular aristocrat he had been sent by his father to court to be educated in the *scola* of king Pippin *and* queen Bertrada.<sup>6</sup>

Charlemagne may have become emperor on Christmas day 800 but it was his daughter-in-law Irmengard who was to be the first Carolingian empress. The coronation of Irmengard and Louis the Pious by pope Stephen on Oct. 5th 816 marks the first imperial coronation of a Frankish queen.<sup>7</sup> The occasion was celebrated a decade later by Ermold in his verse biography in praise of Louis' rule: a golden crown was placed on Irmengard's head.<sup>8</sup> The literary nature of this evidence makes it difficult to interpret as a realistic account or as indicating Byzantine influence on this event.<sup>9</sup> The fact that we cannot identify Irmengard's *dos* led Silvia Konecny to argue that she did not enjoy the status of a full wife until she was crowned as empress in 816.<sup>10</sup> This seems unlikely, not

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'Hludowicus Augustus: Gouverner l'empire chrétien - Idées et réalités', in *Charlemagne's Heir* pp. 3-124, at 77-79 with Nelson, 'Les reines', at 121-123.

<sup>6</sup> *Vita Benedicti*, cap. 1, p. 201; J L Nelson, 'La famille de Charlemagne', *Byzantion*, 61, (1991), pp. 194-212, p. 205.

<sup>7</sup> *ARF*, an 816, p. 144; Thegan, cap. 17, p. 198;

<sup>8</sup> Ermold, vv. 1101-5, p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> G Wolf, discerns glimpses of a Byzantine *ordo* in Ermold's few lines of poetry, thus 'Königinnen-Krönungen des frühen Mittelalters bis zum Beginn des Investiturstreits', *Zeitschrift für Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Kanonische Abteilung* LXXVI, 107, (1990) pp. 62-88, 64, 77-88.

<sup>10</sup> S Konecny, 'Eherecht und Ehepolitik unter Ludwig dem Frommen', *MIOG*, vol 85, (1977) pp. 1-21, 9-12.



least because the evidence for *dos* or morning-gift is itself so sparse in the ninth century. Yet Konecny is surely right to stress the importance of this joint coronation of the imperial couple which set one woman apart as empress, and mother of the emperor's three sons. (There was a precedent for the joint coronation of a royal couple in the reign not of Charlemagne but of Louis's grandfather Pippin, crowned in 754 beside queen Bertrada.<sup>11</sup>) The coronation of Irmengard in 816 signalled that her sons were special. The ritual also highlighted the singularity of Louis's *progenies* defining the imperial family in terms of his body, his nuclear family unit and not the wider *stirps regia* who also claimed descent from his father Charlemagne or grandfather Pippin. This was a vertical rather than a horizontal model of the royal family and the throneworthy that excluded collateral kin such as his cousin Wala, nephew Bernard and indeed his half-brothers Hugo, Drogo and Theoderic who since 814 had been his table-companions.<sup>12</sup>

This process was taken a step further when, in 817, Louis issued the *Ordinatio imperii* a division of the Carolingian realms between his three sons by Irmengard. Arnulf, the emperor's son by a concubine, was excluded.<sup>13</sup> The settlement was also weighted heavily

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<sup>11</sup> The coronation of 754 cannot offer an exact precedent as the couple's two sons were crowned along with their parents. *Codex Carolinus*, no. 11, ed. W Grundlach, *MGH Ep.* 3, Berlin, (1892), p. 505. A Stoclet has argued that the *Clausula* survives uniquely in a tenth century manuscript and is therefore problematic as a source for 754, 'La clausula de unctione Pippini regis: mises au point et nouvelles hypothèses', *Francia*, 8, (1980), pp1-42. J L Nelson, 'Early Medieval Rites of Queen-Making and the Shaping of Medieval Queenship', in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. A. Duggan, Woodbridge, (1997), pp 301-315 at 302-3 makes the point that these early descriptions of queenly coronations are only 'possibilities'. There is no surviving *ordo* for a queen's consecration until 856. On Pippin's earlier promotion of a nuclear royal family in the mid eighth century see Nelson, 'La famille', pp. 196-7.

<sup>12</sup> Nithard I, cap. 1, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Chronicon Moissacense*, ed. G Pertz, *MGH SS* 1, an 817, pp. 312-13.

in favour of Lothar, making him co-emperor with his father and Louis' ultimate heir with imperial authority over his younger brothers. The intellectual credit for the *Ordinatio imperii* has been awarded to Frankish churchmen such as Agobard and Wala, that is to ideologues who propounded the ethic of a single, indivisible Christian empire.<sup>14</sup> Peter Classen rightly pointed out a fundamental similarity between Charlemagne's *divisio* of 806 and the *Ordinatio imperii* of 817 in that the earlier document also envisaged the integrity of the Frankish heartlands and awarded Francia to the eldest son.<sup>15</sup> But there is an important difference between the circumstances in which each division had been drawn up: in 817 a queen, whose status had recently been confirmed by coronation, was in a position to promote the interests of her sons. The exclusion of Bernard of Italy, the emperor's nephew, may be attributable to Irmengard or a faction around her.<sup>16</sup> Bernard, effectively disinherited by the *Ordinatio*, rebelled unsuccessfully against his uncle and was captured and imprisoned. Five months later after appearing before the assembly in April 818, he was blinded on the 'judgement of the Franks'.<sup>17</sup> The blinding and subsequent

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<sup>14</sup> On 817 and *Reichseinheitsidee* see, Dümmler, *Geschichte*, pp. 17-24, Simson, *Jahrbücher*, I, pp. 100-110, cf Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire', p. 53 with note 188, and E Boshof, 'Einheitsidee und Teilungsprinzip in der Regierungszeit Ludwigs des Frommen', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 161-190.

<sup>15</sup> P Classen, 'Karl der Grosse und die Thronfolge im Frankenreich', in *Festschrift für H. Heimpel*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Inst. für Geschichte, 36.3 Göttingen, (1972) pp. 109-134.

<sup>16</sup> K F Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire' at p. 35 ff

<sup>17</sup> *ARF*, an 817, p. 147, an 818, p. 148; Thegan cap. 22, pp. 210-212; Astron, cap. 29, pp. 380-382; Nithard, I, cap. 2, pp. 6-8. T F X Noble, 'The Revolt of King Bernard of Italy', *Studi Medievali*, 3. 15, (1974) pp. 315-26; P Depreux, 'Das Königtum Bernhards von Italien und sein Verhältnis zum Kaisertum', *Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, 72, (1992) pp. 235-260; J Jarnut, 'Kaiser Ludwig der Fromme und König Bernhard von Italien, Der Versuch einer Rehabilitierung', *Studi Medievali*, 3.30, (1989) pp. 637-48

death of Bernard was a terrible and shocking event for the Frankish elite and was not forgotten. This was a harsh penalty used only in extreme cases where the more usual option of internal exile in royal monasteries was deemed inappropriate.<sup>18</sup> In his biography Thegan distanced Louis from culpability by presenting the emperor as ignorant of the intentions of his *proceres*. Barely five months after Bernard's death Irmengard was dead. In some minds the two events were connected. The belief that Irmengard had been responsible for Bernard's death and had engineered his fall was implicit in an anonymous vision in the early 820s which originated in Alemannia. In the vision Irmengard appeared in hell where she was impaled on three rocks: she would be relieved from her torments if the emperor performed penance for the death of Bernard.<sup>19</sup> The expression of virulent and pointed political criticism in the form of visions or dreams of the next world was an established genre in the early middle ages.<sup>20</sup> But what is extraordinary about this attack on Irmengard was that she was the mother of the emperor's legitimate sons and not like another maligned queen, Charlemagne's third wife Fastrada, the mother of daughters only.<sup>21</sup> In 833 Agobard, writing in support of

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<sup>18</sup> For perceptive discussion of the treatment of Bernard and his supporters in the aftermath of the rebellion see M de Jong, *In Samuel's image: child oblation in the early medieval west*, Leiden, (1995) pp. 254-7.

<sup>19</sup> H. Houben, '*Visio cuiusdam pauperculae mulieris*: Überlieferung und Herkunft eines frühmittelalterlichen Visionstextes (mit Neuedition)', *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, 124 (1976) pp. 31-42; P Dutton, has suggested that the three rocks stood for her three sons, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire*, Nebraska (1994), pp 67-73, especially 72-73; Andrea of Bergamo, a late ninth century source makes Irmengard culpable for Bernard's death, *Historia*, ed. O Holder-Egger, MGH SRL, cap. 6, p. 225.

<sup>20</sup> W Levison, 'Die Politik in den Jenseitsvisionen des frühen Mittelalters', in his *Aus rheinischer und frankischer Frühzeit*, Dusseldorf (1948) pp. 229-46; Dutton, as note 19.

<sup>21</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap. 20, p. 26.



Irmengard's eldest son Lothar, drew an unflattering contrast between Judith and her predecessor in the imperial palace, the '*bona coniunx*'.<sup>22</sup> Yet Irmengard's immediate posthumous reputation in the early 820s was not that of the good wife but of the wicked queen. Agobard's view of Irmengard, written in support of her sons, challenged the rumour mill. All such evidence is clearly tendentious but serves to demonstrate that what little we know of Irmengard's career reveals that involvement in politics made her vulnerable to defamation. There were hostile views of Irmengard in the reign of Louis the Pious just as there were positive and praiseworthy accounts of Judith. The two wives of Louis the Pious are much more like 'sisters under the skin' than is at first apparent from their very different historical reputations. But beyond the fact that there is more evidence for Judith's career there is a significant difference between the two empresses. What differentiates the queenship exercised by the two women lies in their relationship with Louis the Pious. Irmengard was the wife of Louis's youth, mother of his sons. Judith was the young second wife of a middle-aged emperor with three all but adult sons. The role and responsibilities of the queen in the *aula regis* may have been broadly similar but the political circumstances in which a second wife acted were different.

Louis the Pious celebrated Christmas 818 at Aachen and summoned the smaller winter assembly, usually attended by the *seniores* amongst the Frankish aristocracy and often held on 2nd February, the Feast of the Purification.<sup>23</sup> It was during this assembly that the emperor married Judith, daughter of count Welf. Irmengard had been chosen for him by his father Charlemagne; now the emperor had the freedom to decide on his own marital future. Louis the Pious did not choose to remain a widower nor to take series of

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<sup>22</sup> *LA II*, cap. 2, p. 316

<sup>23</sup> *DOP*, cap. 6, pp. 82-4.



concubines instead he chose marriage. The manner in which the emperor chose a bride was unprecedented. The palace annalist reports that the emperor 'married the daughter of count Welf after having looked over many of the daughters of the nobility.'<sup>24</sup> The Astronomer's life of the emperor, written in 841, gives further detail:

'He was considering taking a wife at the prompting of his men, for it was feared by many that he might wish to relinquish the helm of government. Yielding to their wishes daughters of the nobility were brought from far and wide for him to look at and he married Judith, daughter of the very noble count Welf.'<sup>25</sup>

The Astronomer made extensive use of the *ARF* in his work, fleshing out in the biography the leaner contemporary account of the annals.<sup>26</sup> It is of course possible that Louis the Pious was seriously considering abdication and retirement to a monastery in the winter of 818 and that he was indeed persuaded to remarry by his leading men.<sup>27</sup> But it seems more likely that the Astronomer writing with the benefit of hindsight and looking back at the events of the reign over twenty years later, could afford the emperor a pious cliché. Louis the Pious was ritually deposed from imperial office by his son Lothar and a small group of Frankish bishops in November 833: in the biography the Astronomer may be offering an implicit contrast with the later enforced resignation of imperial office. Significantly in the Astronomer's account of 819 it was the emperor's leading men who

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<sup>24</sup> '*Quo peracto imperator inspectis plerisque nobilium filiabus Huelphi comitis filiam nomine Iudith duxit uxorem.*' *ARF*, an 819, p. 150.

<sup>25</sup> '*Qua tempestate monitu suorum uxorem meditabatur inire copulam; timebatur enim a multis, ne regni vellet relinquere gubernacula. Sed compellebatur tandemque eorum voluntati satisfaciens et undecumque adductas procerum filias inspiciens, Iudith filiam Uelponis nobilissimi comitis in matrimonium iunxit.*' Astron, cap. 32, p. 392.

<sup>26</sup> See the comments of Tremp in the introduction to his edition, Astron, pp. 81-86.

<sup>27</sup> Konecny discusses this possibility, 'Eherecht' p. 15. The Astronomer's biography is the only source to suggest that Louis considered abdication in 818.

persuaded him to remain at the helm of government, perhaps the same leading men who would side with Lothar in 833. Thus for the Astronomer, the emperor's remarriage, a mark of his engagement with the responsibilities of the secular aristocratic life, rendered impossible the rejection of political power and a retreat into the religious life.

Thegan, writing c836, chose to emphasise Judith's family connections and lineage:

'The following year (819) he married the daughter of his duke Welf, who was of the most noble family from Bavaria whilst on her mother's side, (her name was Heilwig), she was from a very noble Saxon line. The name of the girl was Judith and he made her queen. She was very beautiful'.<sup>28</sup>

There is no mention here of an aristocratic initiative to see the emperor remarry nor of Louis making his choice of bride from a selection of the daughters of the Frankish nobility. Thegan presents the marriage as an alliance between the emperor and a family with noble connections east of the Rhine in both the paternal and maternal line. His comment on Judith's beauty is both conventional and politically sure-footed in the light of the fact that he was writing in the life time of both Louis and Judith. I will return to the political significance of the marriage alliance later in this chapter.

Why did he do it? Historians have long sought to understand and explain the possible reasons behind the emperor's remarriage in 819. Some have been baffled, even horrified, by the emperor's action. Poupardin summarised the prevailing negative judgements of Louis the Pious over half a century ago in 1922 when he identified the emperor's marriage

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28. *Sequenti vero anno accepit in coniugium filiam Huuelfi ducis sui, qui erat de nobilissima progenie Baioariorum, et nomen virginis Iudith, que erat ex parte matris, cuius, nomen Eigilui, nobilissimi generis Saxonici, eamque reginam constituit; erat enimvalde pulchra*. Thegan, cap. 26, p. 214. For Thegan's stress on the nobility of these families see J Martindale, 'The French Aristocracy in the Early Middle Ages: A reappraisal', *Past and Present* 75 (1977) pp. 5-45, at 5-6.

to Judith as one of the two 'gross political errors' of the reign.<sup>29</sup> This is because the marriage to Judith jeopardised the succession arrangements set out in 817 between the sons of Irmengard. There was no provision in this *divisio* for any future sons by a new wife - yet this is hardly surprising considering that it was drafted in Irmengard's life-time and she had an interest in its terms. Historians' objections to the second marriage have been personal as much as political, they have objected to Judith herself. In a long historiographical tradition which identified Judith as *the* problem in the reign, the marriage of February 819 was a turning point. In the mid-nineteenth century Dümmler saw Louis the Pious after 819 a prey to feminine wiles - presumably he had been safe from this peculiarly female danger whilst married to Irmengard. In the 1980s Pierre Riché, essentially following Dümmler, saw Judith after 819 rapidly gaining an all-powerful influence over her older husband.<sup>30</sup> But above all it was the choosing of Judith, singled out from other aristocratic women at Aachen, which has been judged to be hugely significant. In the words of Calmette: 'Judith was chosen from the others in a manner which speaks volumes (*qui en dit long*), namely a beauty contest'.<sup>31</sup> More recently another French historian has described Judith as 'Miss Empire' and insisted that we must never forget the manner in which she was chosen to become the emperor's wife.<sup>32</sup> The notion of Judith's beauty as a decisive factor in the emperor's decision to remarry is well-established in historiography. In the eyes of Calmette, Louis the Pious, '*fort sensuel*',

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<sup>29</sup> The other was the penance at Attigny in 822, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol III, Cambridge (1922) pp. 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> Riché, *Les Carolingiens*, pp. 152-60, at p. 152.

<sup>31</sup> Calmette, *L'Effondrement*, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> Thus Depreux, 'Louis le Pieux', p. 185 with note 25.

was a victim of his own lust.<sup>33</sup> In this reading of the reign Judith's sex appeal and the integrity of the Carolingian empire were ranged in opposition to one another! The lack of evidence for Welf's political career (he only appears in the narrative sources in the context of the marriage in 819), has tended to underpin Judith's physical attractiveness as the principal asset of her family and their opportunity of gaining royal notice and patronage.<sup>34</sup> Sexual attraction, and indeed its polar opposite, intense loathing and physical revulsion, was certainly a random factor in the politics of royal families in the early middle ages as the marital history of Lothar II and his wife Theutberga suggests.<sup>35</sup> But we need to look beyond Judith's alleged beauty, which may be no more than routine flattery, and investigate the political and ideological background in 819 more deeply. All that is known of Carolingian marriage alliances suggests that they were not undertaken for trivial reasons.

The ideal of Christian marriage posed a problem for male rulers in the ninth century. The church insisted on a definition of marriage as a monogamous and indissoluble union. Male rulers, including kings, sometimes hankered after more flexible marital and sexual relationships. What if an indissoluble, monogamous, Christian marriage produced no

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30; Calmette essentially restates the remarks of Simson, *Jahrbücher I*, pp. 147-8

<sup>34</sup> For example see Hellman, 'Die Heiraten', p. 17; J Fleckenstein, 'Über die Herkunft der Welfen und ihr Anfänge in Suddeutschenland', in G Tellenbach ed., *Studien und Vorarbeiten zur Geschichte des grossfränkischen und frühdeutschen Adels*, Forschungen zur oberrheinischen Landesgeschichte, 4, Fribourg (1957) pp. 71-136, at p. 96; Konecny, 'Eherecht', p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> Lothar II's 'irreconcilable loathing' for his wife Theutberga is described in *The annals of St Bertin*, transl. J L Nelson, Manchester, (1991), an. 860, p. 92. S Airlie, 'Private bodies and the body politic in the divorce case of Lothar II', *Past and Present*, 161, (1998), pp. 3-38.



sons? The Frankish bishops would not permit repudiation and remarriage<sup>36</sup>: tough rules for a patrimonial society where political authority and landed resources were inherited. A further issue added to the difficulties of kings in the ninth century. There was also no established principle of primogeniture which means that all legitimate sons had claims on royal resources. The remarriage of a king or emperor with adult sons was an event fraught with political tension. It could be read as an act of aggression towards the legitimate adult sons of a first wife, especially the eldest: the marriage of the West Saxon king Aethelwulf to the daughter of Charles the Bald in 856 looks as if it provoked a rebellion by his son Aethelbald.<sup>37</sup> At a stroke political relationships and alliances within the royal household became uncertain, even volatile. A new queen meant the inevitable disruption of patronage networks in the royal household that had centred on the previous queen. The primary losers were the legitimate sons of a first wife. Whilst the new queen proved herself to be fertile and remained of childbearing age, they had to face the unwelcome prospect of the birth of half-brothers in competition for royal resources. Bernard's revolt and subsequent execution less than twelve months before Louis' s marriage to Judith was a recent reminder of family strife. As a royal stepmother grew older and had only daughters, such as Fastrada, or remained childless, like Liutgard, then she might have become less of a threat. It is even possible that she became a political ally or patron of one of her stepsons.<sup>38</sup> Some Frankish aristocrats would also have viewed

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<sup>36</sup> See below, chapter 4, for Carolingian marriage legislation.

<sup>37</sup> As suggested by P Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', in *Court and Kingdom*, pp. 139-153, 150-151 but cf M J Enright, 'Charles the Bald and Aethelwulf of Wessex: the alliance of 856 and strategies of royal succession', *Journal of Medieval History*, 5, pp. 291-302.

<sup>38</sup> This is only conjecture but see the comments of J L Nelson about Fastrada's relationship with the young Louis the Pious in the winter of 791-2, 'Women at the court of Charlemagne: A case of Monstrous Regiment?', in *The Frankish World*, pp. 223-242, at 235.

the emperor's re-marriage with some apprehension but from a different standpoint.

There were winners as well as losers: a new queen meant new opportunities for patronage and advancement. Carolingian wives came from the Frankish aristocracy and these alliances carried with them increased access to the court where patronage and *honores* were distributed. Aristocratic families whose women married into the Carolingian royal family could do well - the career of Gerold, brother of Queen Hildegard offers a good case study.<sup>39</sup>

Yet given the inevitable anxieties and political crises that might be engendered by the remarriage, the question remains as to why Louis the Pious took a second wife almost immediately after the death of Irmengard. There are several separate but related questions to address about the emperor's second marriage. Why did Louis the Pious choose marriage instead of concubinage after the death of Irmengard? Why did he choose the daughter of count Welf? What happened at Aachen in February 819? First, I examine an issue that has come to define Judith in the historiography: namely that she was chosen at Aachen in Aachen in February 819 as the result of some kind of beauty contest in conscious imitation of a Byzantine brideshow. Secondly, the political context of the marriage, the origins of Welf and his family will be explored. Finally, and more tentatively, I look at ideological explanations about the emperor's decision to remarry in 819 and consider the wider implications of what this second marriage may suggest about Louis the Pious's view of his kingship and the emergence of Carolingian queenship.

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<sup>39</sup> Although Gerold's career 'took off' after Hildegard's death: K Leyser, 'Maternal Kin in Early Medieval Germany', in his collected essays, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, London (1994) pp. 181-88, 183; M Borgolte, *Die Grafen Alemanniens in merowingischer und karolingischer Zeit*, Sigmaringen, (1986) pp. 122-126.

Almost a century ago, J B Bury suggested that when Louis the Pious chose Judith at Aachen in 819 he did so in imitation of a Byzantine custom, namely the brideshow. The possible influence of this marriage custom on the Carolingian court in 819 has been accepted with varying degrees of caution by historians of the Franks.<sup>40</sup> Bury described the brideshow as an established mechanism for choosing an imperial bride in Constantinople by the late eighth and ninth centuries. Under the auspices of an imperial commission a search was made throughout the empire to find young, beautiful and virtuous noble women who were then brought to Constantinople. The bridegroom was shown a group of these young women and made his choice of wife.<sup>41</sup> Five imperial marriages between 788-882 have been identified as the outcome of bridesshows but to make a case for the influence of a Byzantine custom on Judith's marriage we are restricted to consideration of two: the very first 'brideshow' held by the empress and regent Irene for her son Constantine VI in 788 and that of 807 organised for his son by the emperor Nicephorus, who deposed Irene in 802.<sup>42</sup>

There is no contemporary evidence for the brideshow alleged to have been organised by the empress Irene in 788 to find a wife for her son Constantine VI. The earliest source for Constantine's marriage to Maria Amnia is the chronicler Theophanes, a pro-Irene

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<sup>40</sup> Calmette, *L'Effondrement*, as note 31; Wemple, *Women*, p. 90; Stafford, *Queens*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>41</sup> *A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I*, London, (1912) pp. 81-83.

<sup>42</sup> The three remaining marriages occurred in 830, 853 and 882, see W Treadgold, 'The bridesshows of the Byzantine emperors', *Byzantion*, 49, (1979), pp. 395-413.

commentator, writing in the early ninth century. Theophanes gives this brief account of the marriage:

'The empress Irene broke off her reconciliation with the Franks. She dispatched Theophanes the protospatharios to bring back a maiden, by the name Maria of Amnia, from the Armeniac theme. Irene married her to her son the Emperor Constantine, although he was quite distressed and unwilling because he was being parted from the daughter of the Frankish king Charles, to whom he had already been engaged. They celebrated his marriage in November of the twelfth indiction.<sup>43</sup>

There is nothing in this passage that suggests the ceremony historians have come to call a brideshow. However, another account of the imperial marriage of 788, written in c. 821 almost thirty-five years later, contains the elements which have come to define the brideshow as an historical event. This brideshow narrative occurs in a hagiography, namely the Life of Saint Philaret, grandfather of Maria Amnia. Furthermore, the Life was written by another family member, her cousin Nicetas.

A saint in the family can depress one's standard of living; in the Life, the aristocratic saint Philaret had impoverished his family and squandered his estates as a result of his prodigious generosity to the poor. The fortunes of the family were transformed when Irene's envoys, dispatched from Constantinople to search the empire for a bride for Constantine VI, arrived in the village of Amnia, Paphlagonia. They sought hospitality for the night with the destitute saint. The guests did not forget their mission and asked to see the women of the family: apparently Philaret's daughters and granddaughters were so beautiful they could not be told apart. However the suitability of prospective brides was

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<sup>43</sup> AM 6281 (Sept 1, 787 - August 31, 788) translated by H Turtledove, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, Philadelphia (1982) pp. 147-8. See with the remarks of I Rochow, *Byzanz in 8 Jahrhundert in der Sicht des Theophanes*, Berliner historische Arbeiten 57, Berlin, (1991) pp. 249-50.



to be measured in accord with a given model - the lauraton, an image portrait of the ideal imperial wife. Nicetas gives no description of the lauraton but two measurements were taken: height and size of foot. Maria and two of her sisters conformed to the specifications of the lauraton and returned to Constantinople with the commissioners as indeed did the entire family. Other young women were found and also brought to the imperial palace. Nicetas insists that Maria begged her fellow competitors to pledge sisterly solidarity and agree that whoever was successful would find dowries and husbands for the others. Irene inspected the candidates with her household official Staurakios and the prospective bridegroom Constantine VI. Each girl was interviewed and those judged unsatisfactory were dismissed with gifts. Maria was chosen by Constantine and brilliant matches were also arranged for her two sisters.<sup>44</sup>

Speck, in his study of the reign of Constantine VI, dismissed the life of Philaret as an unsatisfactory source for the politics of the eighth century: the account of the marriage was unreliable propaganda by the saint's family.<sup>45</sup> Indeed Nicetas glossed over what was in fact an unhappy alliance. Maria gave her husband no sons and was repudiated. But what both accounts share is the presentation of the marriage of 788 as controlled by Irene. The marriage of the heir would have a direct impact on her exercise of imperial authority as regent, for at the Byzantine court, as elsewhere, there was a direct relationship between a son's marriage and the assumption of adult imperial responsibilities. It made sense for Irene to arrange a marriage for her son on her own terms. In 796, however, Irene seized power from Constantine VI and was believed to

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<sup>44</sup> The text has been edited and provided with a parallel French translation by M-H Fourmy and M Leroy in their article 'La Vie de S. Philarete', *Byzantion*, 9, (1934), pp. 85-170, at 113-167.

<sup>45</sup> P Speck, *Kaiser Konstantin VI*, Munich, (1978) pp. 204-7.

have ordered his blinding. Occasionally she styled herself *basileus*, emperor, and she ruled for a little over five years until her deposition in 802 by Nicephorus.<sup>46</sup>

The second imperial marriage which has been categorised by some historians as a brideshow was arranged in 807 by Irene's successor Nicephorus. The evidence is found, again, in the chronicle of Theophanes who by the early ninth century was writing of contemporary events. His attitude to the usurper Nikephorus was violently hostile.

'After a great deal of selection from the maidens from all the land under his dominion, on December 20th Nikephorus chose Theophanu the Athenian, a relative of the blessed Irene, to marry his son Staurakios. She had been engaged to a man and had often slept with him, but Nikephorus separated her from him to marry her to the wretched Staurakios. He shamelessly broke the laws in all matters - in this one as well. With Theophanu he also chose two other girls more beautiful than she, then openly debauched them on the very wedding days; everyone laughed at the dirty man.'<sup>47</sup>

This is the first contemporary reference to an empire-wide search for an imperial bride and that a group of young women were indeed brought to Constantinople. But this is not presented as a laudable custom nor an example of dignified imperial behaviour: the selection of women demonstrates the sexual depravity and boorishness of the usurper Nikephorus. Theophanu was already pledged to another man. Nikephorus is presented as a Christian emperor who uses his power and office in order to oppress the weak and vulnerable: he abuses the chastity of young women. But there are important similarities

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<sup>46</sup> J Herrin, on Irene's use of the imperial title, 'In search of Byzantine Women: three avenues of approach', in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, eds., A Cameron and A Kuhrt, London, (1983), pp. 167-89, at 184-5; S Runciman, 'The empress Irene the Athenian', in *Medieval Women*, ed. Baker, pp. 101-118.

<sup>47</sup> AM 6300 (September 1, 807 - August 31, 808), Turtledove, *Theophanes*, p. 164. See with the remarks of Rochow, *Byzanz*, pp. 288-9.



here with Theophanes' earlier account of the marriage of Constantine VI in 788. Both Maria and Theophanu were noblewomen who were sent to Constantinople at imperial command. Again, we see that it was the imperial parent who controlled the marriage and selected a bride for the heir. There was little or no free choice of partner here for the young bridegrooms, these so called bridesows were all about (parental) power not sex.

The nature of the evidence for the marriages of 788 and 807 does not suggest that at the time of the marriage of Louis the Pious to Judith in 819 the bridesow existed as an established custom. It is the account of Philaret's grand-daughter's marriage in the life of that saint which is the reference point for historians' construction of the bridesow as an historic event. Yet the idea of the bridesow as an historical custom in the eighth and ninth century has exerted a powerful hold on historical imagination to the extent that some male historians have written of it almost wistfully. And it has also found fertile ground in an historiography that has tended to exoticise Byzantium, and Byzantine empresses in particular.<sup>48</sup> Elements of the bridesow narratives also suggest the accretion of pervasive folk-myths and literary motifs: the, usually male, quest for the most beautiful woman; the discovery, however disguised, of true nobility and virtue and a ruler's search for a good wife. Two of these motifs would have been familiar to a Greek, Christian culture in the early middle ages. The first is the judgement of Paris which was popular in Byzantine literature<sup>49</sup> and the second is the biblical story of queen Esther who,

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<sup>48</sup> See the tone of remarks by Treadgold, 'Bridesows', p. 401, and C Diehl on Irene, *Imperatrices de Byzance*, Paris, (1959), pp. 1-20, 59-85; Runciman, 'Irene', *passim*.

<sup>49</sup> A R Littlewood, 'Symbolism of the apple in Byzantine Literature', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 23 (1974) pp. 39-51.

by the mid ninth century, had become a favourite biblical model of the good queen for Frankish intellectuals, such as Hrabanus Maurus and Hincmar of Rheims.<sup>50</sup>

Byzantine historians are now more wary in their interpretation of these accounts of so-called bridesows as reliable evidence of an institutional practice or Bury's established mechanism for choosing an empress.<sup>51</sup> But we do not have to choose between an interpretation of the bridesow as a literary and biblical motif or as an historic event. I suggest that in the chronicle of Theophanes in 807, there is evidence for something much more mundane, less exotic and certainly far less erotically charged than a bridesow. It is possible that young noble women were occasionally summoned or sent to the imperial capital in order to be married to the heir. And because of their precarious political status both Irene and Nicephorus needed to choose their sons' brides with special care. Louis the Pious, or someone in his household with an interest in the affairs of the imperial court at Constantinople, may have heard reports that Irene or Nicephorus had arranged marriages for their sons by bringing young noblewomen to court. There were certainly contacts at the highest level between Aachen and Constantinople in the years 788 to 819.<sup>52</sup> But relations between the imperial capitals were not always amicable and even if

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<sup>50</sup> Hrabanus presented Judith with a commentary on the book of Esther, see below, chapter 7; Hincmar used Esther as a model of chastity and virtue in the 856 *ordo* for Charles the Bald's daughter Judith, Jackson, *Ordines*, p. 78; Nelson, 'Queen-making', pp. 307-08.

<sup>51</sup> L. Ryden, sees these narratives as essentially a literary motif, 'The Bridesows at the Byzantine Court - History or fiction?', *Erano*, 83, (1985) pp. 175-191; cf. Lynda Garland, who argues for a more literal reading of the evidence for the bridesows as an historic event, *Byzantine empresses*, London, (1999), pp. 5-6, 80-81.

<sup>52</sup> For the early ninth century see : *ARF*, an 811, p. 133; an 813, p. 138; an 814, p. 140; M McCormick 'Byzantium and the West, 700-900', in *NCMH II*, pp. 349-380, p. 374



Irene had made an empire-wide search in order to bring young noblewomen to Constantinople in order to find a bride for her son, as the *Life of Philaret* suggests, why would the Franks wish to imitate a practice of the despised Irene?<sup>53</sup> The idea of the brideshow may be more of a hindrance than a help in understanding the politics of imperial marriage.

How then to explain the 819 annal? First, it is unlikely that the passage which describes Judith's marriage is an interpolation. From 794 the royal annals were written at court under the auspices of the chapel and archchaplain; they were a contemporary record compiled more or less yearly. But if the annal for 819 was altered or expanded later then such changes would have to have been completed circa 830. The *AB* continue where the *ARF* finish in 829 - most copies of the *ARF* *do not* continue with the *AB*, but *those that do* contain identical versions of the *ARF*. And the 819 annal does not have the appearance of an interpolation, unlike Hincmar's later embellishments in the *AB* which are obtrusive and where Hincmar's motives are intelligible.<sup>54</sup>

In the ninth century, an erudite reader of the 819 annal might have called to mind the biblical story of Esther, chosen by King Ahasuerus to be his second wife after a search amongst the women of his kingdom. It is this narrative which also underpins the *Life of Philaret*. But it is difficult to argue from the 819 annal that Louis the Pious acted in conscious imitation of the biblical story. The choosing of Esther also involved the

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<sup>53</sup> McCormick paints a picture of conflict rather than admiration between Aachen and Constantinople in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, *ibid.*, p. 368. For attitudes to Irene at the Frankish court see Nelson, 'Monstrous Regiment', pp. 228-230.

<sup>54</sup> J L Nelson, 'The annals of St Bertin', in *Court and Kingdom*, pp. 23-40, at 35 where she discusses Hincmar's annal for 865.

repudiation of a disobedient and disgraced first wife, Vashti. What then did the annalist mean when he wrote that the emperor 'looked over many daughters of the nobility'? The death of Irmengard at the beginning of October in 818 would have been an important event and widely reported during the following winter. The elite of the Frankish aristocracy, the kind of families who made it their business to keep in touch with what was happening at court, would surely have known that the empress had died. Stuart Airlie has drawn attention to a shared sense of belonging to a court culture between '*palatini*'.<sup>55</sup> In other words a political and social community was developing around the palace complex at Aachen: we know for certain that Einhard had a house at Aachen and Notker also ~~in~~ refers in passing to the houses (*mansiones*) of the aristocracy.<sup>56</sup> This being the case, the great Frankish magnates may have been accustomed to attend the February assembly at Aachen *en famille*, that is with their wives and daughters. In 819 men like Welf had a particular incentive to bring daughters of marriageable age. I suggest that the Frankish aristocracy brought their young women to the assembly at Aachen in February 819 anticipating that the emperor might remarry. When Louis the Pious 'looked over' the daughters of the magnates who attended his assembly it was because there were (many ?) would-be brides and, more importantly, their fathers present to negotiate a prestigious marriage alliance. Several families aspired to a Carolingian marriage. On what grounds might Louis the Pious have preferred the daughter of count Welf? There were sufficient political reasons for a marriage alliance with a powerful aristocratic family east of the Rhine. Alemannia and Bavaria were important regions for the recruitment of

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<sup>55</sup> On the dissemination of news from the court see S Airlie, 'Bonds of Power and Bonds of Association in the Court Circle of Louis the Pious', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 191-204, especially pp. 194-95.

<sup>56</sup> Notker, I, cap 30, p. 41.

Carolingian armies and had strategic significance for the routes south into Italy.<sup>57</sup> The problem is however that we have no contemporary information about Welf's career before 819. There has even been some debate as to whether he received his countship as a consequence of his daughter's marriage however a straightforward reading of the 819 annal suggests that when Welf brought Judith to the general assembly in February he was already a *comes*, discharging a regular duty to be present at the emperor's *placita*.<sup>58</sup> It is unlikely that this was his first visit to Aachen or to the assembly but it marks his only appearance in contemporary sources. Welf did not spring Minerva-like from the forehead of Louis the Pious. Another problem regarding the evidence for Welf in 819 is the fact that we cannot locate his estates from charter material, or indeed his *comitatus*. Judith's father, despite being hailed as the ancestor of one of the most illustrious families of the medieval period, is an unknown entity. A low profile in the *ARF*, for example, was certainly not unusual for a magnate. The palace annalists in the reign of Louis the Pious rarely name or list those counts and magnates in attendance at the assemblies, or if they do, a particular *comitatus* is not identified. It was only a tiny elite who made the leap from being local agents of the dynasty attending the twice yearly assemblies to the dizzy and dangerous heights of the palatine *proceres* and royal counsellors. When magnates came to the attention of commentators on imperial politics and court affairs, the occasion of notice was as often as not conspiracy against the regime, maladministration or military

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<sup>57</sup> K F Werner, 'Missus-marchio-comes: Entre l'administration centrale et l'administration locale dans de l'Empire carolingien', in *Histoire comparée de l'administration (IVe-XVIIIe siècle)*, eds. W. Paravicini and K F Werner, Beihefte der *Francia* 9, Munich, (1980) pp. 191-239.

<sup>58</sup> Borgolte identifies Welf as a count in Alemannia but has no evidence earlier than 819, *Grafen*, pp. 288-9.

disaster. Welf was a count but we cannot place him close to the political centre of power, the royal palace.

Of the three major narrative sources which describe the marriage, it is Thegan who is the most informative about Judith's family. A Frankish noble himself, he was a man with a keen awareness of the minute gradations of social status, who did not stress *nobilitas* where he felt it undeserved, as his hostility to the low-born Ebo makes plain.<sup>59</sup> Thegan insists on Judith's aristocratic descent through both parents, that is, a specifically non-Frankish lineage from noble families east of the Rhine on the borders of the *regnum*. In 819 Saxony and Bavaria were still on the borders of Carolingian rule, indeed missionary activity to the Saxons continued during Louis's reign.<sup>60</sup> Welf's connections were not parochial. Just as Thegan had established the aristocratic connections of Louis' mother Hildegard and then Irmengard, so in the same way he put forward Judith's noble credentials to show that her ancestry was also worthy of an alliance with the Carolingians.<sup>61</sup>

There is other evidence from the early 820s that sheds light on Judith's family, namely the *Liber Memorialis* of the Alemannian monastery of Reichenau on Lake Constance. The names of powerful local families, other monastic communities empire-wide, abbots, bishops and counts were entered in the memorial book to form a spiritual community of friends, both living and dead, for the Reichenau monks, a kindred of prayer. Moreover,

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<sup>59</sup> See above, note 28.

<sup>60</sup> Corvey was founded from Corbie by Adalhard in 822, D Ganz, *Corbie in the Carolingian Renaissance*, Sigmaringen, (1990), pp. 28-9.

<sup>61</sup> For his comments on Irmengard's family see above, note 2.



the clusters of family entries reveal the monks' links with a secular family who might commemorate an ancestor or parent by endowing the monastery with land or gifts for the repose of his soul.<sup>62</sup> A monastery and more especially a memorial book was involved in the maintenance of familial commemoration. Entries in the Reichenau Book began to be compiled sometime before November 824. Heading the list of *viventes*, the living friends of Reichenau in 824, are the imperial family: Louis, Judith and Louis' sons.<sup>63</sup> Below the entries for the imperial family is a cluster of names, Judith's immediate family, her mother, brothers and sister; Heilwig, Chuonrad, Ruadolf, Ruadroh and Hemma.<sup>64</sup> Welf does not appear. Another Welf and a Rudolf appear in a separate entry elsewhere on the same page, but in a clearly different hand. The names of Welf's wife and those of his children were passed from generation to generation: they belonged to the family identity and help to identify kinship with Welf and his forebears and descendants.<sup>65</sup> We know that in 825 Heilwig was already abbess of the convent of Chelles, near Paris: she had probably entered the convent at Welf's death. The fact that his name is missing from the Reichenau entry suggests that at the time it was being compiled in 824 Welf was already

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<sup>62</sup> O G Oexle, *Forschungen zu monastischen und geistlichen Gemeinschaften im westfränkischen Bereich*, Munstersche Mittelalter-schriften, 31, (1978) provides evidence for these *libri* and their use in West Francia; see also M de Jong, 'Carolingian monasticism: the power of prayer', in *NCMH II*, pp. 622-53 at 649-51.

<sup>63</sup> *Das Verbrüderungsbuch der Abtei Reichenau*, ed J Authenrieth, D Geuenich and K Schmid, MGH Libri Memoriales, NS I, Hanover (1979) p. 98.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*; G Tellenbach suggests that Ruadroh died in childhood, 'Über die ältesten Welfen in West- und Ostfrankreich', in *Studien und Vorarbeiten*, pp. 335-40.

<sup>65</sup> See the comments of S Airlie on the use of such material and the problems of identifying family membership in this way, 'The Aristocracy', *NCMH II*, pp. 431-450.

dead.<sup>66</sup> He may have lived long enough to benefit from imperial patronage. The marriage of Judith in 819 opened the way to the possession of estates in the Schussengau, on the northern shore of lake Constance which, in 816, were still royal fisc.<sup>67</sup> It was left to Heilwig and her children to capitalise on the family's increased access to royal patronage. Conrad and Rudolf were sufficiently involved in court politics to be targeted with their sister in the palace revolt of 830 against the regime of Louis. The best indication of the power of the family, especially east of the Rhine, is their achievement of a second Carolingian marriage: in 827 Emma married Judith's stepson, the young Louis.<sup>68</sup> Judith and Emma were involved in the endowment of Corvey in Saxony, their mother's homeland. According to a twelfth-century *Catalogus* the estates granted to the monastery by the emperor in the mid-820s were given at the request of his wife. Unfortunately, a surviving copy of the grant of Eresburg omits the crucial *ambasciator*. A similar endowment by the young Louis, which must be post-827, was requested by queen Emma.<sup>69</sup> Wenskus argued, on the basis of these endowments, that Heilwig was a member of the Kobbonid family, with whom Corvey had strong connections.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> K Schmid argued that Welf was still alive in 824, 'Welfisches Selbstverständnis', in *Adel und Kirche: Gerd Tellenbach zum 65. Geburtstag dargebrecht von Freunden und Schülern*, eds., J Fleckenstein and K Schmid, Fribourg, Basle and Vienna (1968) pp. 389-416, 389ff and p. 406, with n 38.

<sup>67</sup> Fleckenstein, 'Welfen', p. 90; Airlie, 'The Aristocracy', p. 447.

<sup>68</sup> AX, an 827, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> *Catalogus abbatum et nomina fratrum Corbiensium*, ed. O. Holger-Egger, MGH SS 13, p. 275; *Die Kaiserurkunden der Provinz Westfalen 777-1313*, ed. R. Wilmans, Munster, (1867) 1, ix., p. 25; Sickel, L242, p. 157.

<sup>70</sup> On Heilwig and Corvey, R. Wenskus, *Sachsische Stämmesadel und fränkischer Reichsadel*, Abhandlungen der Wissenschaften in Göttingen 93, Göttingen, (1976) pp. 253, 275; cf. T Reuter's criticism of this study for a naive reading of the prosopographic evidence, 'The historiography of the medieval nobility in the twentieth century', in

Tracking down Welf, locating his estates, countship and family history before 819 is problematic. The earliest evidence for the family's landholding in the ninth century places them in Alemannia, not Bavaria. In January 839, twenty years after his sister's marriage to the emperor, Conrad is documented as a count in the Argengau, on the northern shore of lake Constance. There is also evidence in 839 for count Conrad in the Eritgau and Albgau, but not until 844 in the Linzgau.<sup>71</sup> Conrad held these lands as the agent of imperial government. In his study of the Alemannian counts, Borgolte has shown just how recently a member of the Welf family had come to hold some of these lands: in the 820s they had been in other hands.<sup>72</sup> In other words these areas had probably been granted to Conrad by the emperor to ensure his loyal support in the late 830s, against a rebellious Louis the German who was also Conrad's brother-in-law. There is no evidence for any of Judith's kinsmen owning land in Alemannia until 861 when a count Conrad exchanged part of the *comitatus* with abbot Grimald of St Gall.<sup>73</sup>

The conflict between Thegan's evidence that Judith's father was a noble Bavarian *dux* and the earliest documentary evidence for the estates and office-holding of his

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*Companion to Historiography*, ed., M Bentley, London, (1997), pp. 177-95, at p.188 with note 39.

<sup>71</sup> Borgtolte, *Grafen*, pp. 165-170; *Urkundenbuch der Abtei St Gallen*, ed., H Wartmann, Zurich, (1863) I, 378, p. 353.

<sup>72</sup> Borgolte, *Grafen*, p. 166.

<sup>73</sup> Borgolte makes a case for identifying this Conrad with Judith's brother rather than his son, Conrad II, *Grafen*, pp. 167-8; *Die Urkunden Ludwigs der deutschen*, MGH Dipl Regum Germaniae, I, ed. P Kehr, Berlin (1932), no. 103, but see the remarks of Susan Reynolds on the difficulty of distinguishing between family and comital estates and the tendency for counts to absorb comital estates into their own holdings, *Fiefs and Vassals*, Oxford, (1994) pp. 111-14.



descendants in Alemannia is one that historians have long sought to reconcile. The 'origin of the Welfs' has been a significant issue in German historiography.<sup>74</sup> The major study of the 'Welfs' has been that of Josef Fleckenstein, published in 1957, which, unlike much of the previous historiography which was mostly concerned with the later medieval Welf genealogies, has direct bearing on Judith's family and their position in the Carolingian aristocracy.<sup>75</sup> Fleckenstein examined closely the conflicting evidence and argued that from the history of the estates alone it is impossible to identify any as family land in the ninth century: he argued that the family established its earliest landholding base in Alemannia.<sup>76</sup> He widened the debate in the light of the research of the Tellenbach school on the nature and role of the Carolingian aristocracy to look beyond Judith's father; at the relationship of the aristocracy east of the Rhine with the Carolingians and the roots of this relationship in the great eighth century expansion of the empire east of the Rhine. Tellenbach analysed the leading aristocratic families under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious and argued that they originated for the most part from the territory between the Meuse and the Moselle, homeland of the royal dynasty.<sup>77</sup> This group who, as it were, sustained the Carolingian regime have been termed the *Reichsaristokratie*, and they were transplanted empire-wide in the eighth century. Fleckenstein argued that Judith's father was neither Alemannian nor Bavarian but the direct descendant of Ruthard, an Austrasian

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<sup>74</sup> B Arnold, 'Rewriting the history of the Welfs', in *Journal of Medieval History*, 22, (1996) pp. 379-93, especially p. 381f.

<sup>75</sup> For the full reference to this important article see above, note 34.

<sup>76</sup> Fleckenstein, 'Welfen', p. 94.

<sup>77</sup> G Tellenbach, *Königtum und Stämme in die Werdezeit des deutschen Reiches*, Quellen und Studien zur Verfassungsgeschichte des deutschen Reiches im Mittelalter und Neuzeit 7, Weimar, (1939).



Frank who with Warin in the 740s had been Pippin's administrators '*totius Alamaniae*'.<sup>78</sup> As an Austrasian Frank, Ruthard never had allods in Alemannia: these lay west of the Rhine and any estates he did hold in the east were from Pippin. Here he prefigured Judith and her family: Ruthard was a count in the Argengau in 769, an office held by Judith's brother Conrad a century later. Ruthard also founded the monasteries of Schwarzach and Gengenbach: Judith acted on behalf of Schwarzach as an *ambasciator* in 828. In these two examples Fleckenstein found evidence for the continuity of the family east of the Rhine as Judith and Conrad followed in Ruthard's footsteps. After 777, Ruthard disappeared from the sources, which implies that from this point he lost the patronage of Pippin's son Charlemagne. *Konigsnähe* was regained by Judith's father in the next generation.<sup>79</sup>

This thesis, which broke new ground in placing the 'Welfs' in the wider context of the role of the Frankish aristocracy in Carolingian rule east of the Rhine, has been widely accepted.<sup>80</sup> It was not unlikely that Warin and Ruthard made marriage alliances with the local aristocracy east of the Rhine, into families loyal to the regime. But central to Fleckenstein's argument was the need to argue for an Alemannian *origo* for Judith's father in order to construct a genealogy which would dove-tail neatly with the activities of Ruthard and Warin in Alemannia in the 740s. And here Fleckenstein encountered a problem because he had to disregard the best contemporary evidence for the history of Judith's family, namely Thegan. The biographer's identification of Welf as the descendant

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<sup>78</sup> Fleckenstein, 'Welfen', p. 97 ff.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*; on Ruthard see Borgolte, *Grafen*, pp. 229-36.

<sup>80</sup> Welf is identified as a Frank in Werner's genealogy, 'Die Nachkommen', p.444.

of a noble Bavarian family contradicted Fleckenstein's thesis, and therefore had to be bulldozed out of the way. Fleckenstein sought a linear descent from Ruthard to Welf and charged Thegan with deliberately suppressing a connection with Alemannia; the biography stands accused of being a '*Parteischrift*', and the misinformed work of a '*linksrheinischer*'.<sup>81</sup> These objections will be dealt with in turn.

The inference that because Thegan did not live east of the Rhine he is uninformed about eastern affairs is difficult to maintain. At one time Thegan was a *chorepiscopus* at Trier but that, surely, did not cut him off from all knowledge of affairs east of the Rhine.<sup>82</sup> Indeed the Rhine was the arterial route of the *regnum*.<sup>83</sup> There is also the possibility that Thegan got his genealogical information, if not from Judith herself, then from a source close to her and Louis. He was also writing in her lifetime: he is the only source for 819 interested in genealogy and is unique in giving full details on *both* of her parents. But Fleckenstein argued that in comparison with his details on other families, such as that of Louis's own mother Hildegard, he was relatively ignorant about Judith's ancestry.<sup>84</sup> It is true that Thegan provides Hildegard with a fuller genealogy but then he was giving special emphasis to Louis' mother and trying to show Hildegard's descent from a specific individual, duke Gottfried; furthermore by proving this connection he was also extolling the illustrious blood line of his subject, Louis the Pious. Thegan's details on Hildegard

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<sup>81</sup> Fleckenstein, 'Welfen', pp. 74-75, 117-19

<sup>82</sup> For Thegan's career, see E Tremp, 'Thegan bei Astronomus', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 691-95.

<sup>83</sup> See below, chapter 4 at note 53, for the Astronomer's remarks concerning *Franci* and *Germani* at Aachen.

<sup>84</sup> Thegan, cap. 2, p. 176; Fleckenstein, 'Welfen', p. 118; Borgolte, *Grafen*, p. 184 f.

serve a different purpose in the biography from those on Judith's parents, which underline the point that Louis was marrying into a noble family east of the Rhine.

Fleckenstein also argued that Thegan's work was one of outspoken bias: bias against Judith and her family which led him to minimize their activities or to suppress them altogether. Thus Thegan mentions her brothers Conrad and Rudolf but only in the context of their capture and imprisonment in the revolt of 830; the birth of Charles the Bald is unrecorded until 829 when he received the grant of Alemannia. Nor did Thegan take the trouble to suppress the unproven charge of adultery against Judith. Yet it is difficult to read the biography as a campaign of disinformation waged by Thegan against Judith and her family. Judith and her brothers were not, after all, Thegan's subject. The birth of Charles is also omitted from the 823 palace annal but then the birth of royal children is not usually recorded. The charges of adultery, the ostensible reason for the revolt of 830, could hardly have been neatly sidestepped. In fact Thegan handles with some delicacy this very sensitive matter which reflected badly on Louis.<sup>85</sup> Thegan is neither a sympathetic nor a hostile source for the history of the 'Welfs' and Thegan's bias was in favour of the emperor's son, the young Louis, and against the pretensions of social upstarts such as the low-born Ebo.<sup>86</sup>

Bias against Judith and her family, Fleckenstein argued, led Thegan to distance them from Alemannia. Thegan thus chose to give her father a less significant and probably earlier link with Bavaria. Fleckenstein's criticism hinges once more on the biographer's

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<sup>85</sup> For the charge of adultery against Judith in 830 and Thegan's treatment of this matter see below, chapter 4.

<sup>86</sup> See below, chapter 7.

treatment of Queen Hildegard and her family. Hildegard was a member of the 'Ulrichung' family; Einhard tells us that she was Swabian.<sup>87</sup> Her brother Gerold was appointed prefect of Bavaria by Charlemagne in 791 and died on campaign against the Avars in 799. His generous donations to Reichenau were extolled by the young Walahfrid in his *Visio Wettini* written 824.<sup>88</sup> Fleckenstein argued that 'Ulrichung' power in Alemannia retreated before the advance of the 'Welfs', and once the family had secured the marriage Judith engaged in a 'grand strategy' to promote the rise of her brothers. This caused Thegan to offer Hildegard's family a proud Alemannian *origo* whilst placing Judith's father in Bavaria to distance him from this power struggle.

This aspect of Fleckenstein's argument is interesting, touching as it does on the conflict between maternal and wifely kin. It is possible that after the death of Gerold, Welf and his family became more prominent in Alemannia. Genealogy is certainly selective and can be manipulated to show the most desirable political connections, but was a putative 'Welfish' coup in Alemannia really a live issue at the time Thegan was writing circa 836? There is a larger issue here concerning the assumptions of the Tellenbach school which underpin Fleckenstein's argument. Whilst it is possible to amass evidence to suggest the existence of large family groups we cannot assume that individuals had any awareness of membership or allegiance to kindreds, constructed by historians, such as 'Welf' or 'Ulrichung'. Borgolte's detailed study of the aristocracy in Alemannia has shown that there were several powerful comital families in Alemannia in the late eighth and early ninth

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<sup>87</sup> *'Hildigardam de gente Suaborum praecipue nobilitatis feminam', Vita Karoli*, cap. 18, p. 22.

<sup>88</sup> D A Traill, Walahfrid Strabo's *Visio Wettini*: text, translation and commentary, *Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters*, 2, Frankfurt, (1974), vv. 811-26, pp. 68-9, with p. 175.



centuries as<sup>89</sup> Historians are now less inclined to identify large monolithic kin groups in conflict with one another over long periods of time. There was as likely to be competition between smaller groups and individual family members.<sup>90</sup> A further problem with Fleckenstein's analysis is the assumption that Judith was an all-powerful, ruthlessly single-minded and, above all, successful political fixer on behalf of her family in the royal household.

A noble Bavarian *origo* for Welf is not necessarily incompatible with a countship and political connections in Alemannia. We are dealing here with an international, cognatic, familial structure in which *gens* or *natio*, when described by writers such as Einhard in his description of Charlemagne's wives, and in genealogies, may be both arbitrary and flexible according to the needs of the writer. The Frankish aristocracy, where it was transplanted outside the Carolingian fisc lands, must surely have married into local and more ancient ruling families. Within the imperial aristocracy there were many and diverse connections and kindreds through marriage; a particular lineage or family connection could be reactivated, played down or stressed as the circumstances arose. Louis may well have wanted to maintain a balance of power in Alemannia, an important province in the *regnum* controlling the Alpine passes to Italy and the route east to Bavaria and the marches. A good argument for not ignoring or underplaying the importance of Welf's

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<sup>89</sup> M Borgolte, *Geschichte der Grafschaften Alemanniens in fränkischer Zeit*, Vorträge und Forschungen, 31, Sigmaringen, (1984), pp. 245-58

<sup>90</sup> See Airlie, 'Aristocracy', pp. 434-9, 446-8; T Reuter, on developments in medieval German historiography, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages*, London, (1991) pp. 13-14 and more recently his overview, 'Historiography of the medieval nobility', in *Companion to Historiography*, ed., M Bentley, London (1997) pp. 177-95.

Bavarian connection is the marriage in 827 of Welf's younger daughter, Judith's sister Emma, to Louis the German.<sup>91</sup>

The eastern provinces of the Carolingian empire remained important for the raising of armies. When the emperor left Angers in October 818 he had returned to Francia, via the palace at Herstal, and it was here that he heard news of the ambitions of Liudewit in Pannonia and potential conflict on the eastern frontier. Liudewit is mentioned again under the 819 annal; by 820, the major military preoccupation of the annalist was Liudewit's rebellion. The annal for this year opens with the assembly held at Aachen in January to discuss the raising of armies to send against the the rebels. There follows an unusually full account of the regional recruitment of these armies and their marching routes eastwards: 'The three armies were raised from Saxony , East Francia and Alemannia, Bavaria and also Italy.'<sup>92</sup> The provincial composition of these bands, so meticulously recorded, may be significant to the marriage alliance with Welf's daughter in 819. As a *dux* Welf may have been an important war leader against the rebels, Louis's marriage with Judith the price of his support. There were concrete gains: the marriage brought important fiscal lands in Schussengau into Welf hands.<sup>93</sup>

The political background of the marriage was thoroughly conventional in terms of Carolingian politics. A consistent pattern in Charlemagne's marital history was the choice

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<sup>91</sup> See below, chapter 3, at note 44.

<sup>92</sup> *ARF*, an 818, pp. 148-9; an 819, p. 150; an 820, pp. 152-3.

<sup>93</sup> Fleckenstein, 'Welfen', p. 90; Airlie, 'The Aristocracy', p. 447.

of aristocratic women from families east of the Rhine as both wives and concubines.<sup>94</sup> In his choice of Welf's daughter, Louis the Pious was following in his father's footsteps. But ideological reasons behind the emperor's decision to remarry may point towards a difference between imperial father and son in their attitudes to and, critically, the presentation of, Christian kingship, especially its relationship to marriage. Nithard declared that it was impossible to understand the history of the Carolingian family without beginning with Charlemagne.<sup>95</sup> It is good advice. The marital history of Charlemagne makes an interesting case study to compare with his son. The first point to make about Charlemagne's marital relationships is that it is hard to discern a clear distinction between marriage and concubinage. There was no hard and fast rule about what constituted a full marriage. Was Himiltrude, mother of Pippin the Hunchback, Charlemagne's wife or concubine? The fact that Einhard does not give her wifely status - his list of Charlemagne's wives begins with the Lombard princess - may only indicate the later downgrading of this relationship.<sup>96</sup> Both Himiltrude and the daughter of Desiderius were repudiated by Charlemagne: his third wife, Hildegard, was the mother of three legitimate sons namely Louis the Pious and his brothers Charles and Pippin. When she died in 783 Charlemagne had her buried in the cathedral at Metz - an important centre of Carolingian family consciousness. Charlemagne was thirty-six years old in 783 and his youngest legitimate son, Louis the Pious was a child of five. The king quickly took a fourth wife, Fastrada, that same year. This marriage, which ended with the queen's death

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<sup>94</sup> See the remarks of Janet Nelson on tensions between east and west Franks in Charlemagne's reign and the political context of his marriage to the easterner, Fastrada, 'The siting of the Council at Frankfort', in *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794: Kristallisationspunkt Karolingischer Kultur*, ed. R Berndt, Mainz, (1997), pp. 149-65.

<sup>95</sup> Nithard, *prologus*, p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> Nelson, 'Monstrous Regiment', p. 232; Stafford, *Queens*, pp. 60, 70.

in 794, produced no further sons.<sup>97</sup> There is some uncertainty as to whether Charlemagne married his fifth wife Liutgard in 794 or only some five years later on the occasion of the pope Leo's visit to Paderborn. When Charlemagne was crowned as emperor on Christmas Day 800 he had no empress at his side; Liutgard had been dead six months.<sup>98</sup> Charlemagne felt no need to marry for the sixth time and in the last fourteen years of his life had a series of aristocratic concubines, four of whom are identified by Einhard; the fact that one of them was called Regina may be an example of Charlemagne's sense of humour or indeed of her pretensions.<sup>99</sup> If we consider Charlemagne's remarriage at the death of Hildegard then it was chance, the outcome of biology, not ideology or design, that he did not have legitimate sons by two wives. Fastrada was certainly acknowledged as queen, the case for Liutgard is less certain.<sup>100</sup> Yet this did not prevent rebellion within the royal kin. Himiltrude's son, Pippin the Hunchback had once been recognised as throneworthy, (he bore his grandfather's name), and joined a rebellion against his father. By 813 only one of Hildegard's sons remained alive to inherit the Frankish *regnum*. This may have been a significant psychological lesson for Louis the Pious at the death of Irmengard. Three sons might not be enough to provide a king with a pool of heirs.

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<sup>97</sup> She was buried at St Albans, Mainz, *ARF*, an 794, p. 94; Nelson, 'Monstrous Regiment', p. 235 and *idem*, 'The council of Frankfort', where she argues for the significance of Fastrada's eastern connections and her heavyweight political role as queen, pp. 157-62; *idem*, 'Les reines', p. 127.

<sup>98</sup> *ARF*, an 800, p. 110. Liutgard died at St Martin, Tours on 4th June 800. Einhard calls her *domna*.

<sup>99</sup> The others were: Madelgard, Gervinda and Adalinda; Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap 18, p 23.

<sup>100</sup> See note 96.



The choice of marriage over concubinage in 819 may tell us something about the new emperor's receptiveness to Christian values and teaching. Louis had assembled around him a group of religious advisers who were enthusiastic promoters of reform.

Concubinage may not have been a credible option in the eyes of men such as Benedict of Aniane.<sup>101</sup> I am aware of the danger of hindsight here, of constructing a retrospective and coherent view of Louis the Pious in the earlier years of his reign which relies on the interpretation of his later actions. But there is some evidence in the first years of his rule as emperor which suggests a consciousness of rulership which was markedly different from Charlemagne's. In 814 when Louis and Irmengard arrived at Aachen he had expelled his sisters from the palace for immorality and, at a stroke, cut the political connections they had built up over the past fourteen years. The royal women were dispatched to their monasteries. Louis issued a capitulary regulating the administration of the palace of Aachen, circa 819, which included clauses banning prostitutes from the environs.<sup>102</sup> There were good political reasons behind these actions: Janet Nelson has argued that the violent expulsion of the royal women in 814 created the conditions for Louis's rule.<sup>103</sup> The new emperor chose to dress these measures in the language of Christian morality and sexual ethics: his rule began with a critique of sexual behaviour in the Carolingian royal family and, within a few years, within the complex of the *sedes regni*, the palace of Aachen itself. New emperor, new morality, new Aachen.

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<sup>101</sup> J Fried, 'Ludwig der Fromme, das Papsttum und die fränkische Kirche', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 231-73, 240ff.

<sup>102</sup> *De disciplina palatii Aquisgranensis*, MGH Capit. I, 146, pp. 297-8. See the comments of Werner, 'Gouverner l'empire', pp. 77-79.

<sup>103</sup> Nelson, 'La famille', pp. 204, 210.

It is hardly a new and ground-breaking interpretation of the reign to argue that the emperor was, in fact, pious. Louis may have internalised or, more likely, chose to act out the teaching of the Frankish church with regard to sexual morality but this did not make him the weak, priest-ridden, emasculated emperor incapable of holding Charlemagne's *regnum* intact that has been such a defining part of his myth. Louis was his father's son. 'New', if only in the sense of newly imposed, Christian values were not allowed to conflict with the grim necessities of Frankish politics, as the harsh treatment of Bernard in 817 makes plain. The emperor's piety should rather be understood as part of the armoury of Frankish rulership. Louis was also to show himself alive to the possibilities of Christian ideology and ritual. A second marriage would certainly have created tension in Louis's relationships with his sons but it could also be interpreted as an act of political self-confidence. The emperor had already overcome rebellion within the family led by a royal nephew. The awesome and terrible authority of a father over his sons had been well expressed in the preface to the *Ordinatio imperii* of 817 which reserved to the emperor all paternal rights over his sons.<sup>104</sup> And just what this authority over the family could mean in reality had been demonstrated both to Carolingian kin and the Frankish nobility in the blinding of Bernard. Such brutal treatment of a close male relative could be read as a clear indication of how the emperor saw his power and authority and in 818 may have given his own sons pause for thought, especially Lothar, despite the fact that he was the beneficiary of Bernard's exclusion from a Frankish inheritance. In the 820s Louis managed his sons with a firm hand.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> '... *salva in omnibus nostra imperiali potestate super filios et populum nostrum, cum omni subiectione quae patri a filiis et imperatori ac regis a suis populis exhibetur.*', MGH Capit. I, p. 271.

<sup>105</sup> See below, chapter 3.

There is another account of the 819 marriage in an annal written at Chelles before 833 under the auspices of Judith's mother, abbess Heilwig, which contains what amounts to a mini-biography of Judith.<sup>106</sup> Judith is described in the context of her marriage in 819 as 'very beautiful and educated in the best instruction of the flowers of wisdom, associated with him in marriage and then crowned and acclaimed by all as empress'.<sup>107</sup> This suggests that Judith was probably crowned as empress on the occasion of her marriage. Although in this annal we have to allow for a proud mother's representation of her imperial daughter this is also evidence for Judith as the first queen to be greeted by the imperial *laudes*. Does this indicate a conscious desire on the part of Louis the Pious to raise the status and importance of the queen? The months around Christmas of 818 were the only period during the adult life of Louis the Pious when he was without a wife and empress. Remarriage at the death of Irmengard created a new queen for the royal palace. Traditionally when historians have attempted to identify an imperial ideology for Louis the Pious they have started with the *Ordinatio* of 817 and Louis' arrangements for the imperial title and succession.<sup>108</sup> But the coronation of the imperial couple in 816 and then the re-creation, through a second marriage to Judith in 819, of another imperial pair at Aachen may be more revealing of Louis' ideology of Christian rulership and his

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<sup>106</sup> See above, Introduction.

<sup>107</sup> '*...domnus imperator Hladowicus habebat quandam reginam nomine Iudith, pulchram nimis et sapientiae floribus optime instructam, sociatam sibi in coniugio, quae etiam imperatrx coronata et augusta ab omnibus est acclamata*', *AM*, an 830, pp. 95-6. A study of the contribution of Chelles, and indeed abbess Heilwig, to the ideology of Frankish queenship remains to be written.

<sup>108</sup> For example, R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians 751-987*, London (1983), p. 136; FL Ganshof, 'Some Observations on the "Ordinatio Imperii" of 817', in *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, transl. J. Sondheimer, London (1971).

construction the Carolingian family. This means that in 819 Judith, an aristocratic teenager from Alemmania of, perhaps, above average good looks and education, with a memorable biblical name found herself placed at the centre of the imperial court where the empress-queen was already perceived to be a critical figure in the exercise and representation of Carolingian rule.



## Chapter 2

### Judith's *dos*: San Salvatore, Brescia

On the morning after his marriage, the pagan Clovis, having instructed his Christian queen Clotilde in the 'ways of the flesh', asked her to name her gift. The future saint chose carefully and wisely. She did not ask for royal estates, valuable treasure or any earthly wealth but for a prize that would have an eternal value, namely the conversion of her husband to the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> This late ninth-century account of Clotilde's role in the conversion of Clovis and the Frankish people to Christianity turns upon a description of the practice of morning-gift. The morning-gift was a custom amongst the Franks (and indeed the Alemans and Lombards) where the bride received a gift from her husband, traditionally the morning after the marriage had been consummated, in recognition of her virginity. Yet the morning-gift was not the only means of endowment at marriage.

Under the Roman empire a *dos* had been a dowry; the resources which passed from the bride's father to her husband at marriage. Over twenty years ago Diane Owen Hughes argued for the absence of a dotal or dowry marriage system in the northern Mediterranean until it emerged in the twelfth century. In a wide-ranging discussion of the development of marriage customs in medieval Europe, Owen Hughes saw the emergence of dowry as congruous with the appearance of linear, dynastic aristocratic families in the twelfth century who traced their origins to a single, male ancestor. A patrilineal family, she argued, chose to dower their own women at marriage rather than alienate scarce patrimony to wives in a morning-gift which might result in loss of resources.<sup>2</sup> Where in the early medieval period the custom of morning-gift focused on the sexual relationship

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<sup>1</sup> *Vita Sanctae Clotildis*, ed., B Krusch, MGH SRM 2, cap. 5, pp. 341-48; translated by J A McNamara et al. in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, London, (1992) pp. 40-50, at p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> D. Owen Hughes, 'From brideprice to dowry' in *Journal of Family History*, 3, (1978) pp. 262-96, 274-6, 280-85, 287-91.

- illustrated in the ninth-century Life of queen Clotilde - this was at the expense of patrilineal ties. Morning-gift privileged consummation as a definition of marriage and thus the conjugal relationship between husband and wife whereas a dowry marriage system asserted parental control over the couple.

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<sup>1</sup>gnatz.  
This argument assumed the correctness of Duby's thesis of a 'great shift' from ~~agnatic~~ to ~~agnatic~~ family structures in western Europe, which saw the emergence of dynastic, patrilineal aristocratic families by the twelfth century.<sup>3</sup> But it is essentially an argument based on negative evidence which is always a danger when making generalisations about early medieval Europe. A first difficulty is the ambiguity of the word *dos* which can mean *either* dowry or morning-gift. Secondly, the control of both family resources and the marriage strategies of the young were not concerns exclusive to the twelfth century family. The custom of morning-gift also involved the transfer of resources between the generations, the transaction was both vertical, father to son as well as horizontal, husband to wife. In the ninth century land and moveable wealth had to be released from father to son to enable a morning-gift, and therefore a marriage, to be made. The marriage of Lothar to Irmengard, the daughter of Hugh of Tours, provides an example of this process. Louis the Pious granted his son Lothar sixty manses from a royal vill at Erstein, in Alsace<sup>4</sup>; it was this same land which Lothar used in 821 to dower his new wife.<sup>5</sup> In this case the practice of morning-gift did not inhibit paternal control of a son's marriage, indeed by ninth century standards, Lothar was a comparatively elderly bridegroom at the age of twenty-seven.<sup>6</sup> Women also brought resources to a marriage:

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<sup>3</sup> See Reuter, 'Historiography of the medieval nobility', p. 190.

<sup>4</sup> The emperor's diploma to Lothar is undated, but the grant must be after 817 because Lothar is described as emperor, Bouquet VI, 25, p. 646; Sickel, L120, p. 119.

<sup>5</sup> Lothar described the origin of the estates thirty years later '*quas a nobis nomine dotis accepit, hoc est in villa, cuius vocabulum Herinstein*', T Schieffer, ed., *Die Urkunden Lothars I und Lothars II*, MGH Dipl. Karolinorum, Vol III, Berlin-Zurich, (1966), 106, p. 252.

<sup>6</sup> Werner, 'Die Nachkommen' Karl des Grossen', p. 446 on the marriages of Louis' sons.

brides of high social status, especially royal women and noble women who married into the royal family, surely left the paternal household endowed with significant economic resources to display their class position and family wealth. The purpose of dowering a wife at marriage was to protect her and her children from destitution in the event of abandonment by her husband but, more importantly, a *dos* provided some economic security in widowhood.<sup>7</sup> By 866, Pope Nicholas I could tell the pagan Bulgars that the giving of a *dos* at marriage was normal Christian practice and an essential component of a legitimate marriage.<sup>8</sup> The symbolic value of the *dos* was important to royal wives; if *dos* was one of the marks of full marriage, as pope Nicholas insisted, then the undowered wife had little more status or security than a concubine.<sup>9</sup> The economic value of the bride's endowment was also a statement of wealth and social status and, in the case of queens befitted a woman's elevation to king's wife. Gregory of Tours records Chilperic's lavish grant to his bride Galswinth of the revenues from five cities as *morgengabe*.<sup>10</sup> But although by the mid ninth century a *dos* of some kind was the due of *all* women at marriage most evidence for its provision, as distinct from its prescription, is both slight and inferential; it is also restricted largely to the royal family. Judith is the first Carolingian queen for whom there is any good evidence for an identifiable *dos*: shortly after their marriage Louis the Pious granted his wife the Benedictine convent of San Salvatore, in the city of Brescia, to hold '*in iure beneficii*'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In practice, however, widows in the ninth century might experience difficulty in retaining their *dos* see J L Nelson, 'The wary widow', in *Property and power in the early middle ages*, eds., W. Davies and P. Fouracre, Cambridge, (1995), pp. 82-113.

<sup>8</sup> *Epistolae*, MGH Epp. 6, ed. G Pertz, (1825), Ep. 99, pp. 568- 609, at p. 570

<sup>9</sup> See Stafford, *Queens*, pp. 101-104, for a discussion of *dos* and its purpose.

<sup>10</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Liber Historiae.*, IX, cap. 20.

<sup>11</sup> The identification of San Salvatore as Judith's *dos* was first made by Konecny, 'Eherecht', p.12; G. Porro-Lambertenghi, ed., *Codex Diplomaticus Longobardiae*, Turin, (1873) (= *Historiae Patriae Monumenta*, vol 13, hereafter cited as *HPM*) , no. 103, p. 188, ; Sickel, L221, p. 150.



Duby's argument for the 'great shift' in the eleventh-century has recently been questioned, indeed undermined, by Pauline Stafford.<sup>12</sup> By the ninth century the distinction between dower (*dos*), that is the husband's endowment of his bride and the morning-gift had been lost: while in Lombard Italy morning-gift came to include *dos*, in Francia *dos* came to include morning-gift.<sup>13</sup> Did Welf provide his daughter Judith with a dowry in February 819 when she married the emperor? The answer to this question depends on what we are looking for as a dowry and, indeed, where we look.

First, gift-giving, which was a complex and often ritualised social and economic activity in early medieval Europe. The recipient of a gift was placed under an obligation to offer a token counter-gift. There is an example of this custom in the context of a marriage, albeit from the dramatic and highly-coloured narrative of Gregory of Tours, which shows that it was sometimes more than a mere token. Gregory describes the huge quantities of royal treasure that king Chilperic's daughter took with her as she set off for Spain for her marriage to the Visigothic king.<sup>14</sup> At what point does what was originally a symbolic, token gift become a considerable economic factor in marriage negotiations, a dowry in all but name? A bride's trousseau when she left her father's household may have consisted

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<sup>12</sup> 'La mutation familiale: a suitable case for caution', in *The community, the family and the saint. Patterns of power in early medieval Europe*, eds. J Hill and M Swan Turnhout, (1998), pp. 103-26.

<sup>13</sup> B M Kreutz, 'The twilight of Morgengabe', in *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living. Essays in honor of David Herlihy*, Michigan, eds. S K Sohn Jr and S A Epstein., (1996) pp. 131-48, and R Le Jan, 'Aux origins du douaire medieval' in *Veuves et Veuve dans le haut moyen âge*, ed. M Parisse, Paris, (1993), pp. 107-22.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum*, VI, cap. 45. P Stafford discusses the culture of gift exchange amongst intellectuals and monasteries in, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', in *Court and Kingdom*, pp. 139-53, p. 141-2, and makes the point that on the occasion of the young Judith's marriage to King Aethelwulf in 856 gifts were *exchanged* p. 144: Owen Hughes, 'From brideprice', pp. 272-3, also notes that in seventh and eighth century Visigothic Spain and Lombard Italy the father's gift 'grew in prominence and substance'.



of treasure and luxury goods, fine garments, ornaments and gifts. Where a woman's dowry was moveable wealth rather than land then it would remain hidden from most written records which preserve a history of land ownership and rights. What is lacking for the earlier ninth century are explicit references to grants of land as dowry. Judith's marriage to Louis the Pious, and indeed that of their daughter, allows some speculation.

Possible evidence for a dowry for Judith is found c. 867, in the will of Eberhard of Friuli and his wife Gisela, the only daughter of Louis the Pious and Judith. The will of Eberhard and Gisela is famous mostly for the description of their extensive collection of books and manuscripts, it also details the couple's estates throughout the Carolingian empire, including Italy, the Rhineland, Alemannia and Flanders.<sup>15</sup> Hlawitschka identified estates in the will from the lower Rhine district as the ancient allods of Eberhard's family.<sup>16</sup> But the will also describes lands in Alem<sup>man</sup>nia and the estates of Cysoing, Annappes, Somain and Vitry in Flanders. Over half a century ago in a piece of historical detective work Philip Grierson showed that these Flemish manors could probably be identified with the unnamed fisci in Charlemagne's survey of royal estates in the *Brevium Exempla*, a document probably compiled some time in the last fourteen years of his reign.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the four Flemish *villae* found in the will of Eberhard and Gisela were still part of the imperial fisc in the early ninth century. At what point in the ninth century did imperial fisci in Flanders find their way into the hands of Eberhard's family? Loyal service to the Carolingians by Eberhard's father Unruoch, a witness to Charlemagne's will, is a plausible explanation. But there is another possibility. Philip Grierson argued that these former royal manors in Flanders had constituted Gisela's

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<sup>15</sup> I de Coussemaker, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Cysoing*, Lille, (1883), 1, pp.1-5.

<sup>16</sup> E Hlawitschka, *Franken, Alemannen, Bayern und Burgunden in Oberitalien 774-962*, Freiburg (1960), pp. 169-72, at p. 172.

<sup>17</sup> P Grierson, 'The identity of the unnamed fisci in the "Brevium exempla ad describendos res ecclesiasticas et fiscales"', in *Revue Belge de philologie et d'histoire*, no. 18, (1937), pp. 437-9; MGH Capit. I, no 128, pp. 250-256.

dowry when, sometime in the mid 830s, she had married Eberhard.<sup>18</sup> There are obviously problems in using the marriage of a royal woman as evidence for the existence of dowry as any kind of widespread custom amongst the Frankish aristocracy. Gisela was a rare thing in her father's palace, namely a Carolingian princess. Royal women were few in the acknowledged family circle of Louis the Pious: early in his reign the new emperor had turned his face against the household of women that had been a feature of his father Charlemagne's palace in the late eighth and early ninth century.<sup>19</sup> The new model of royal family life advanced by Louis the Pious was both nuclear and Christian. This meant that Gisela, a legitimate daughter and grand-daughter of emperors had rarity value. Her marriage, probably in 836, was a match of huge political significance and the price of Eberhard's loyalty may have been the transfer of imperial fiefs in Flanders to cement the alliance.<sup>20</sup> But the will of Eberhard and Gisela yields further possibilities, although again the evidence is inferential. Hlawitschka attributed the Alemannian estates in the will to Gisela's dowry or indeed to an earlier countship held by Unroch.<sup>21</sup> But it seems just as likely that a tranche of these Alemannian estates had originally been Judith's dowry from Welf. Gisela had, in her turn, inherited this land from her mother.<sup>22</sup>

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Although the grant of San Salvatore to Judith is the first convent that can probably be identified as a *dos* the association of queens with royal convents was not new. It became customary in the ninth century for Carolingian kings to endow their wives with royal nunneries, a practice that needs to be seen in the context of the dynasty's close control of

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<sup>18</sup> As note 17:

<sup>19</sup> Nelson, 'La famille', pp. 204, 210.

<sup>20</sup> See below, chapter 7, for a discussion of the political context of this alliance.

<sup>21</sup> Hlawitschka, *Franken*, p. 172.

<sup>22</sup> In the testament of Eberhard and Gisela their Alemannian estates went as a block to their eldest son. It is also possible that Judith had herself inherited estates at the death of Welf.

the church. The eighth and ninth centuries saw the Frankish church, the monasteries and bishoprics, acquire vast landed wealth throughout the Frankish realms. As landowners, abbots and abbesses rendered military service for their estates, besides *dona annua*; as is revealed in the '*notitia de servitio monasteriorum*' of Louis the Pious' reign, which graded the monasteries' contributions according to their size and capability.<sup>23</sup> Abbots and bishops were key officers of the *regnum* in the locality. Where queens received monasteries as *dos* this was a means of avoiding alienation of royal fisc whilst, at the same time, controlling these extra-royal resources. Some royal nunneries, such as Chelles and Erstein, became regularly assigned to queens.<sup>24</sup> Charlemagne's grants to his wives are unknown.<sup>25</sup> Yet a clue may be found in the associations of Charlemagne's daughters with the royal convents. We know that some daughters inherited their mothers' rights over houses; Lothar's daughters Bertha and Gisela succeeded their mother, or were associated with her, at Avenay and S. Salvatore, Brescia.<sup>26</sup> Fastrada's daughter, Theoderada, held Argenteuil as a benefice in addition to the convent of Schwarzach am Main; was she succeeding in either place to her mother's dower?<sup>27</sup> Louis the Pious' first wife Irmengard had sufficient rights over Menat in Aquitaine to be able to grant it away to Benedict of Anaine but it is highly unlikely that she would have disposed of her dower in this way. Irmengard also played a protective role towards S. Anthony, Rovergne, on whose behalf she interceded in a charter of August 818.<sup>28</sup> These queens had links with royal nunneries but monastic patronage alone does not point to an

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<sup>23</sup> MGH, Capit I, pp. 350-352.

<sup>24</sup> K. Voigt, *Die karolingische Klosterpolitik und der Niedergang des westfränkischen Königtums. Laienäbte und Klosterinhaber*, Stuttgart, (1917) pp. 39-43 lists the convents associated with royal women.

<sup>25</sup> See above, chapter 1.

<sup>26</sup> Bertha and Gisela, Voigt, as note 24.

<sup>27</sup> Theoderada, *BM2*, 1375; Simson, *Jahrbücher*, I, pp. 18-19.

<sup>28</sup> See above, chapter 1.



identifiable *dos*. Lothar's wife Irmengard, founded a convent on her estate at Erstein and it was there that she was buried on her death in 851.<sup>29</sup>

Louis' grant of S. Salvatore to Judith was a confirmation of Charlemagne's immunity. Judith requested the diploma on her own behalf and the wording of the document implies that she had obtained Charlemagne's confirmation from Brescia and shown this to her husband along with other privileges of the community.<sup>30</sup> The diploma survives in what Sickel described as an undated, 'mutilated tenth century copy'; he proposed a date between 819 and August 825 for the diploma. Judith's marriage, her first appearance in any source, provides the earlier date; the later is suggested by diplomatic evidence. The imperial title used is found only in diplomas until the end of 825; it is used again from 831, by which time Judith was unlikely to have been granted a benefice in Italy.<sup>31</sup> Odorici dated the diploma *after* 822, an argument which depended on estimating the date of birth for Judith's first child, Gisela. But Gisela's birth can be placed only within the broad dates December 819 (nine months after her parents' marriage) and September 822 (nine months before her brother's birth on 13 June 823). Her birth is placed before Charles' for the reason that if she was born early in 824 it is unlikely that she would have been of an age to marry in 835/836.<sup>32</sup> Odorici favoured a date after 822 because of the immunity clause which enjoined the community 'to pray for us and our wife and children' (*pro nobis et coniuge proleque*).<sup>33</sup> This admonition to pray for the stability of the *regnum* and the royal family was a standard clause in grants of immunity and cannot be linked with the birth, particularly the undated birth, of a child. But this reference need

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<sup>29</sup> Schieffer, 106, pp. 252-3; for Irmengard's epitaph by Hrabanus Maurus see, MGH Poetae, 2, p. 239.

<sup>30</sup> '*ostendit nobis quodam auctoritatem immunitatis domini et genitoris nostri Caroli bone memorie*', HPM, 103, p.188.

<sup>31</sup> For the dating of the charter see Sickel, pp. 150, 329.

<sup>32</sup> F. Odorici, *Storie Bresciane* Vol IV, Brescia, (1855), no. 4, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.



not refer specifically to the children of Louis and Judith, but to the emperor's children by Irmengard. Böhmer and Muhlbacher noticed similarities between the diploma and another issued from Aachen at the time of Judith's marriage in favour of S. Maria, Friuli.<sup>34</sup> But the diplomatic is not the only evidence for dating the grant. Even if one takes the broad limits 819-834 a date must be found when it was *possible* for Judith to hold S. Salvatore *in iure beneficii*. A date after 830 is unlikely owing to Lothar's involvement in the revolt of that year.<sup>35</sup> Indeed once Lothar was sent to Italy as king in the autumn of 822 would Judith have been granted a key monastery in his kingdom? The most likely dating and occasion for the grant of such a prestigious and wealthy benefice, and, moreover a convent associated with a queen, was her marriage to Louis in February 819. The elimination of Bernard in April 818 and the dislodging of his queen Cunigond, of course, made this valuable Italian asset available once more.

Brescia is a city on the Lombard plain yet close to the Alpine foothills leading to the mountain passes north to Alemannia and Bavaria. In the mid-eighth century Brescia was a walled Roman city with four gates, a square street plan, and an aqueduct. The monastery was built in the heart of the Roman city, near the remains of the forum.<sup>36</sup> A substantial quantity of the monastery's charters survive from the reign of Desiderius, which enable a detailed picture of its estates and privileges to be reconstructed from the foundation of the house to the Frankish conquest of the Lombard kingdom in 774.<sup>37</sup> To complement the Lombard evidence there is Lothar's 837 confirmation of the convent's

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<sup>34</sup> BM2,802.

<sup>35</sup> See below, chapter 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Storia Brescia*, Vol I, ed. Trecanni degli Alfieri, Brescia (1963) in which see G. Bognetti, pp. 395-483 on the topography and history of the city in the eighth and ninth centuries.

<sup>37</sup> L. Schiaparelli, ed., *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo*, (vols 1 and 2), Fonti per la storia d'Italia, nos 62-63, Rome, (1927, 1933); C.R. Brühl, ed., *Codice Diplomatico Longobardo*, (vol 3.1), Fonti per la storia d'Italia, no 64, Rome, (1973).

estates in twenty-seven named places.<sup>38</sup> The convent was founded by Ansa, the later queen, in 751 and it was a prestige royal venture.<sup>39</sup> The first buildings may have been complete by January 759, the date of the first extant donation in favour of the abbess Ansilperga, daughter of the king and queen. Ansilperga received the *curtis* of Cerropicto with all its buildings, tenant dwellings and slaves. Cerropicto, or the *curtis* of Serpent, is one of the estates that can be identified in the survey of 837.<sup>40</sup> The wealth of this royal Lombard house was considerable: Ansa's convent was endowed with lavish grants of royal land, precious gifts and a fine church.<sup>41</sup> The so-called 'foundation charter' of 4th October 760, issued jointly in the names of Ansa, Desiderius and their son Adelchis, itemised many expensive objects including the exquisite cross of Desiderius now in the Museo Cristiano, and gold and silver for the decoration of the new church. The convent was tied firmly to the royal household by being placed under the protection of the royal palace at Pavia, sixty kilometres away. The nuns were given freedom of election and the size of the community was limited to forty, a number not to be exceeded unless there were insufficient nuns to fulfil the offices and pray for the souls of the royal family.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Schieffer, no 35, p. 112-115, four of these locations can be identified from the extant Lombard material - an indication of the monastery's expansion rather than the decline post 774.

<sup>39</sup> C Wickham, *Early medieval Italy: Central power and local society 400-1000*, London (1981) p. 81; K. Voigt, *Die königlichen Eigenkloster in Longobardenreiche* (Neudruck der Ausgabe Gotha 1909; Aalen, 1969); see also JL Nelson, 'Making a difference in eighth century politics: the daughters of Desiderius', in *After Rome's Fall: narrators and sources of early medieval history*, ed. A C Murray, Toronto, (1999), pp. 171-90.

<sup>40</sup> Brühl, no 31, pp. 189-191, at 190; Schieffer, p.114.

<sup>41</sup> H Becher, 'Das königliche Frauenkloster San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia im Spiegel seiner Memorialüberlieferung', *FMS*, 17, (1983), pp. 299-392, for the convent's early history see 299-301. For a description of the convent's estates see S Wemple, 'S. Salvatore/S. Giulia: A case study in the endowment and patronage of a major female monastery in northern Italy', in *Women of the medieval world: Essays in honour of J H Mundy*, eds. J Kirschner and S Wemple, Oxford, (1985), pp. 85-91.

<sup>42</sup> Brühl, no 33, pp. 205-208.

The patronage of Ansa was the key to the convent's success. Records of Ansa's personal donations of family lands to the convent are lost, acknowledged only in later confirmations.<sup>43</sup> It is also apparent that Abbess Ansilperga had a ready supply of money to enable the convent to consolidate its land-holding base through the purchase of land; San Salvatore appears to have been the only religious foundation in the region buying land.<sup>44</sup> This may well be an accident of the survival of evidence but it indicates the substantial sums at the convent's disposal through Ansa to create a solid, unified landholding base for her convent. Abbess Ansilperga obtained charters of confirmation for these transactions from the king and his son. As queen, Ansa exploited her position in the royal household to build up her convent's resources. Political turmoil and violence in the royal palace at Pavia resulted in San Salvatore increasing its stake in Sirmione and its *finēs* that stretched up into the mountains. When Cunimond of Sirmione killed one of Ansa's retainers, the gasind Manipert, in the palace at Pavia the queen was ultimately the beneficiary of the outrage. Cunimond forfeited his estates to San Salvatore although on the queen's intercession he retained a life interest, the usufruct.<sup>45</sup> Under the tutelage of a powerful queen the estates of the house stretched across Lombardy in just over twenty years from its foundation. But the evidence for San Salvatore comes to an abrupt halt, with the Carolingian conquest of the Lombard kingdom in 774.

When the siege of the royal palace at Pavia ended in June 774 with the capture of the city the Lombard royal family were taken prisoner. Desiderius, Ansa, their daughter and royal treasure were deported to Francia.<sup>46</sup> Did Charlemagne's soldiers come to Brescia to take abbess Ansilperga prisoner? Her fate at San Salvatore is unknown but the house had been such a centre of the Lombard royal family that she would not have been able to

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<sup>43</sup> For Ansa's donations, Brühl, nos 2, 5-7, pp. 273-275.

<sup>44</sup> For land purchases, Schiaparelli, vol 2, nos , 225-26, 228, 271.

<sup>45</sup> Brühl, no 36, pp. 221-224; for further endowments by Desiderius see nos 37-42, 44, pp. 221-45, 251-60.

<sup>46</sup> *ARF*, an 774, pp. 38-9.



hold her office. One of Charlemagne's handful of diplomas issued from Pavia, the royal capital, on 16th July 774 was an act of piety in favour of St Martin, Tours, '*patronus noster*' but at the expense of San Salvatore. The diploma was issued jointly with queen Hildegard: the monks of the great Frankish monastery gained the *castrum* of Sirmione, and, significantly for the security of the new Frankish kingdom, control of Alpine passes.<sup>47</sup> Ansa, founder and royal patron of San Salvatore, is mentioned in the diploma but not awarded the title queen.

In 781, Radoara, abbess and *rectrix*, obtained confirmation of the convent's privileges from Charlemagne.<sup>48</sup> Janet Nelson has recently suggested that she may have been a Frank and thus an incomer. She may be that same Radoara, '*femina religiosa*', who over thirty years earlier had appeared in a charter in favour of St. Maria, Brescia.<sup>49</sup> Apart from Charlemagne's grant of immunity San Salvatore's relationship with Frankish kings and queens in Italy before 819 is unknown. Charlemagne's son Pippin was a child when he was sent to rule the Italian kingdom in 781: he married in 795, although the identity of his wife is unknown. After Pippin's early death in 810, the kingdom passed to his son Bernard who ruled from 813. Bernard's wife Cunigond, whom he married in 815, founded the monastery of San Alessandro, Parma and retired there after the failure of Bernard's rebellion and his subsequent death in April 818.<sup>50</sup> Although we have no evidence, considering the prestige and wealth of San Salvatore it would be surprising if, post 774, it was not associated with a Carolingian queen. Cunigond, like the Lombard queen Ansa before her, was probably dispossessed of this wealthy convent as the consequence of violent political change.

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<sup>47</sup> Wickham, *Early medieval Italy*, p. 48; '*coniunx noster Hildegardis regina*', MGH Dipl Karl I, no 81, pp. 116-117

<sup>48</sup> MGH Dipl. Karl I, no 135, p. 186.

<sup>49</sup> Nelson, 'Making a difference', pp. 186-89; *HPM*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>50</sup> See Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 231-2; Werner, *Nachkommen*, p. 445; Nelson, 'Making a difference', p. 172, n.7.



There is evidence of the administrative affairs of the house in the early ninth century. In 813, Adalhard of Corbie, the '*baiulus*' of Pippin's son Bernard <sup>51</sup>, was arbitrator in an exchange of lands between Nonantula and San Salvatore: the confirmation of this transaction by Louis the Pious on 1st August 814 reveals two surprises.<sup>52</sup> First, the convent is described not as San Salvatore but as the '*novum monasterium*', which may suggest that it was during the first twenty years of the ninth century when the monastic church was rebuilt. Secondly, the house was now under the control of a layman, Rudolf, who is identified as *advocatus* and *rector*. The abbess, whoever she was, is not named.

An *advocatus* was an essential representative of a female monastery - it could not prosecute a case in the courts without one. But Rudolf is also *rector*, a title implying control, rule of the convent; *rector* was also a term which described abbatial or episcopal authority, and was interchangeable in diplomas with *abbas* or *abbatissa*.<sup>53</sup> Rudolf cannot be identified in any other context; Judith's brother Rudolf was at the imperial court in 830 but no connection can be hazarded between Rudolf '*rector*' and the Welf family.<sup>54</sup> In the context of the land dispute he clearly had responsibility for the administration of the monastic estates but as a layman no spiritual jurisdiction over the nuns. The fact of Rudolf's existence in 814 suggests that before Judith held San Salvatore as a benefice there was a separation of function between abbess and rector: in the 819 diploma Louis certainly envisaged Judith as *rectrix*.<sup>55</sup> The abbess, Eremperga, can be identified from a local charter. Eremperga was more than the spiritual head of the community; in 822 she

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<sup>51</sup> D Bullough, '*Baiuli* in the Carolingian *regnum Langobardorum* and the career of abbot Waldo (d. 813)', *English Historical Review*, vol 77, (1970), pp. 625-37.

<sup>52</sup> Wickham, *Early medieval Italy*, pp.113-114; for Louis's confirmation, Sickel L12, pp. 87-88.

<sup>53</sup> See '*rectores*', in the *Ordinatio imperii*, MGH Capit. I, cap. 11, p. 272.

<sup>54</sup> See below, chapter 3,

<sup>55</sup> '*predicte coniugi nostre atque successores eius, rectores videlicet*', Sickel, L221, p. 150.

granted a lease to a tenant called Rotpert, on San Salvatore's land. Rotpert held his tenancy as a *libellarius* and owed annual food rents in wine, grain, chickens and eggs plus linen and limited labour services on the convent's land for four months.<sup>56</sup> Eremperga probably managed her convent's affairs at a local level, she is unlikely to have had authority to alienate land. *Rectrix* may have been a useful word to describe a queen because it conveyed authority and proprietorship. An abbess was a *rector* but not all *rectores*, for example, Rudolf and Judith, were abbesses. This indicates the complexity of relationships in a house owned by a lay proprietor or held as a benefice. Queens and other royal women were not always able to be full-time abbesses: Charlemagne's daughters were lay abbesses who lived at court with their children and lovers. They were forced to consider their monastic careers more seriously by their brother Louis in 814. But whilst they lived at court with their father there must have been a regular abbess at each convent to profess and receive new nuns and to care for the everyday spiritual needs of the community. At San Salvatore, a wealthy and hugely important royal house, there was a recognised dual authority exercised by abbess and *rector*. After 819, Judith held the purse strings, received the revenues and was the beneficiary of the nuns' prayers; abbess Eremperga was the spiritual director of the community, discharged the running of the estates - perhaps with the local agents of Louis and Judith. There was also an *advocatus* to represent the convent in legal disputes as Rudolf had done in 813. But what was the significance of the convent to Judith, who never set foot in Italy of her own free will, and to Carolingian rule in Italy? A place can be found for Judith's *dos* within the context of Carolingian settlement, particularly the Alemannian settlement in the cities of Lombardy, and also within the recent turbulent political history of the kingdom.

The Carolingian conquest of 774 did not effect overnight change on the Lombard plain; gradually the Lombard aristocracy had to share their land with incoming Franks, Alemans and Bavarians. Dukes were replaced by Carolingian counts in the cities. The bishops,

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<sup>56</sup> The charter was dispositive - '*ego Eremperga .... per has paginas libelli trado*', HPM, no. 104, pp. 190-91.

for the most part, remained native Lombards.<sup>57</sup> There were exceptions in important cities such as Verona where the Alemannian Rathold, a former monk at Reichenau, proved a staunch supporter of Louis in the crises of 817 and 833. Verona seems to have had a particularly strong Alemannian presence; it was a city equidistant with Brescia from the central passes north to Alemannia and Bavaria. In the proposed 806 '*divisio*', Pippin I had been assigned Italy and south west Alemannia, Chur and the Brenner Pass; in this share Alemannia and the middle Lombard plain were recognised as indivisible.<sup>58</sup>

Hlawitschka's prosopographical study of northerners in Italy shows that Alemannians accounted for a substantial number of incomers, men such as the *comes de Alemannia* Alpcar who served Pippin and Charlemagne and was *baiulus* to Pippin's daughter Adelheid.<sup>59</sup>

One of the results of the conquest of 774 was that northerners, Franks, Alemannians and Bavarians came to hold land and office on both sides of the Alps. Waldo, abbot of Reichenau, who died in 813, was at one time also bishop of the sees of Pavia and Basel.<sup>60</sup> Monastic connections, the Christian community of prayer, was no respecter of geographical boundaries. Entries in the Reichenau memorial book were compiled before 824, when Judith held San Salvatore as a benefice. The friendship page includes bishop Rathold of Verona, a former Reichenau monk as well as inmates of a handful of Italian monasteries: Novalese, Nonantula, Ceneda, the church of the martyr Santa Faustina in Brescia and the *monasterium qui dicatur novum*, namely San Salvatore. The Reichenau memorial book provides the earliest record of the community: in 824 there were 59 nuns. In the mid ninth century the memorial book of San Salvatore recorded the names of

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<sup>57</sup> P Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy', in *NCMH* II, pp. 290-319, especially at pp. 302-310.

<sup>58</sup> *Divisio regnorum*, MGH Capit. I, cap. 2, p. 127.

<sup>59</sup> Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 120-21

<sup>60</sup> For Waldo's transalpine career see Bullough, 'Baiuli', as note 49; Hlawitschka, *Franken*, p. 31.



Reichenau monks.<sup>61</sup> Judith was the daughter of an Alemannian count and Reichenau closely associated with her family as their prominent position in the monastery's memorial book suggests. In the ninth century life of Clotilde the saint is presented naming her own morning-gift. Judith may have chosen San Salvatore for herself in 819: we know that she requested the diploma. And it certainly was not such an unlikely benefice for an Alemannian aristocrat. But after 817 events in the Italian kingdom forced Louis the Pious to become more aware of the importance of the Italian cities, and the need for close control of the key royal resources. San Salvatore in Brescia, was one such royal asset.

The cities of Lombardy were important in the rule of the kingdom where a tradition of urban life had been inherited from the Roman state.<sup>62</sup> The major buildings and political institutions of the Roman state had been within city walls; in the early ninth century Brescia still had a Roman aqueduct. The balance of relationships within the cities - between count and bishop - was crucial to local government. In Brescia one must add the influence of the royal monastery and its abbess. The bishop of Brescia, a suffragan of Milan, has a low profile in the sources in the period 750-822 in comparison with the monastery. Desiderius had a capital and lived within the royal city of Pavia; his aristocracy lived in the cities of the plain. This urban aristocratic lifestyle was less true of Francia. Charlemagne's rule became far more centred on Aachen, the *sedes regni*, after 794, but the Frankish aristocracy tended not to live in cities, although some great magnates might have houses at Aachen, but on their estates in the country. In Italy, then, the loyalty of cities - this is how it is expressed in the sources which focus on bricks and mortar not flesh and blood - was essential to government, especially for an absent king such as Louis in the period 818-822. In 817 when Bernard of Italy conspired against his uncle a rumour reached Aachen that Bernard had taken possession of the

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<sup>61</sup> *Das Verbrüderungsbuch*, p. 98B; McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, p. 210; A Valentini, *Codice necrologico-liturgico del monastero de S. Salvatore/ S Giulia in Brescia*, (Brescia, 1887); H Becher, 'San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia im Spiegel seiner Memorialüberlieferung', *FMS*, 17, (1983), pp. 299-392, 300-02.

<sup>62</sup> On the political importance of the cities, Wickham, *Early medieval Italy*, pp. 80-92; Delogu, 'Lombard and Carolingian Italy', pp. 239, 309-10.



Alpine passes. More serious was the news that 'all the cities of Italy had sworn oaths to him', a statement that expresses the political support of powerful political leaders in Italy in a different way. The palace annalist continued that, 'some of this was true and some not'.<sup>63</sup> Two cities which not succumbed to Bernard's cause, were Verona and Brescia. The Frankish count of Brescia, Suppo, and the Alemannian Ratold, bishop of Verona, warned the emperor of Bernard's intentions.<sup>64</sup> The emperor responded decisively, he raised an army and hurried to intercept Bernard at Chalon-sur-Saone; his nephew surrendered and was removed to Aachen where he was blinded and died as a result of his mutilation.<sup>65</sup> Between Bernard's capture in November 817 and removal to Aachen and Lothar's arrival in the autumn of 822 Italy was a kingdom without a king. During this period of just under five years the emperor ruled Italy from Aachen.

Bernard's rebellion and death probably changed Louis' plans for Italy; the succession plan of 817 had envisaged Lothar eventually succeeding to the Italian kingdom. The emperor did not install his eldest son Lothar as ruler of Italy immediately. Instead, Lothar shared the itinerary of the fisci of Francia between the Seine and the Rhine with his father; co-emperor but subject to his parent. Louis the German took the sub-kingdom of Bavaria and Pippin, Aquitaine. In granting San Salvatore to Judith, Louis the Pious took direct control of a valuable asset in Italy, a house which also had an historic identification with royal authority and, specifically queens, in Lombardy. He ensured that the substantial revenues of San Salvatore did not flow into the treasury of any local aristocratic family, thus building up their political ambitions. This may have come as a disappointment to count Suppo of Brescia but the reward for his loyal service in 817 may have been the

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<sup>63</sup> Astron: cap 29, pp. 380-82; '*omnes Italiae civitates illius verba iurasse*', *ARF*, an 817, p. 147. See also chapter 1 at note 17.

<sup>64</sup> On Suppo and his descendants, the so-called 'Supponids', see Hlawitschka, 'Franken, pp. 299-309', Wickham, *Early medieval Italy*, p. 58.

<sup>65</sup> On Bernard's rebellion see above chapter 1, at note 17.

duchy of Spoleto.<sup>66</sup> At the same time by using the substantial resources of the royal fisc in Italy, which prior to Bernard's death had been unavailable, the emperor avoided granting his second wife any scarce revenues in Francia. Cunigond's loss may have been Judith's gain. Yet Judith did hold estates north of the Alps. The *villa Mons* which lay in the *pagus* of Melun had been given to Judith by Louis the Pious.<sup>67</sup> A reference to the estate in a St Martin's charter dated 15th April 932, described the *villa Mons* in relation to Judith as *ex propria dote sua*.<sup>68</sup> So this estate, which may have formed part of a larger tranche of lands, was also granted to Judith at the time of her marriage but was economically and symbolically insignificant in comparison with her Italian house.

Ultimately, San Salvatore proved an asset that Judith, like queen Ansa (and Cunigond ?) before her, was unable to retain. Her hold on the convent may have looked tenuous once her step-son Lothar was sent to Italy in 822 as king.<sup>69</sup> Eventually the convent was lost to Lothar's wife Irmengard after his revolt in 833 and subsequent retreat from Francia. Judith may have enjoyed the revenues of San Salvatore for a decade or more but Italy was not a likely place of retreat even for an Alemannian-born queen. And certainly not for a queen whose stepson ruled Italy. By 825 Judith's mother Heilwig was installed at Chelles as abbess.<sup>70</sup> In the later 820s, and certainly after 830, Judith may have looked increasingly to Chelles as a fitting royal refuge in her future widowhood. And as a young queen married to an older man provision for her future may never have been far from Judith's thoughts.

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<sup>66</sup> As suggested by Wickham, *Early medieval Italy*, p. 57.

<sup>67</sup> Tessier, 239, pp. 35-41, at p. 40.

<sup>68</sup> P Labbe, *Eloges Historiques*, II, Paris, (1651) pp. 528-9. I am grateful to Dr Giles Brown for pursuing this reference for me in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

<sup>69</sup> *ARF*, an 822, p. 159.

<sup>70</sup> See below, chapter 3

## Chapter 3

### Caesar's wife: 819-830<sup>1</sup>

Princes can learn about kingship from an early age by looking at their father. They are able to observe the life of the royal household at close quarters: the yearly round of assemblies, the late Spring military campaigns, autumn hunting expeditions, the dispensing of justice, the reception of foreign ambassadors, the rhythm of the feasts and fasts of the Christian liturgical year. A queen, unless she was a royal princess who married into another royal dynasty, had no such first hand experience or early training. In February 819 Judith entered the predominantly masculine world of the palace of Louis the Pious as a kind of stranger, thrust suddenly into its centre by marriage. But what differentiated the experience of a new queen from most other outsiders who also had to negotiate the political uncertainties of the court for the first time was that, *ex officio*, she had to occupy a central position in the management and organisation of the royal household. This was a steep learning curve for a young woman who replaced the old queen, her husband's first wife. How did Judith imagine herself as queen? A series of different scripts were available to her.<sup>2</sup> First, there was the model of Queen Esther from the Vulgate, and a girl named Judith would surely have known the history of her own biblical namesake and other Hebrew heroines, as well as stories about saintly Frankish queens such as Balthild, Radegund, and Clotild which she may have heard from Heilwig. There were Welf's reports of his previous trips to Aachen, when he may have been accompanied by Heilwig. But there was also a formal and idealised account of what the queen did in the royal palace and why she was important. Before he died at Corbie in 826 abbot Adalhard, cousin of Charlemagne, wrote a treatise on the government of the royal palace. The title of Adalhard's book, which no longer survives, was *De Ordine Palatii*. This text was highly prized by Louis the Pious: it was kept in the palace library at Aachen where it

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is a revised and expanded version of my 'Caesar's wife: the career of the empress Judith 819-829', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 205-227.

<sup>2</sup> See the perceptive remarks of Stafford, *Queens*, where she discusses the images offered to queens and how they responded to them, pp. 1-31.



was read by the young Hincmar of Rheims. As an elder statesman in 881 Hincmar acknowledged a debt to abbot Adalhard when he wrote his own treatise for the young king Carloman, also called *De Ordine Palatii*.<sup>3</sup> It has recently been argued, convincingly, that the second part of Hincmar's work, where he set out the relationship between the government of the palace and rule of the kingdom, should be attributed to Adalhard's earlier text.<sup>4</sup> This would mean that the famous chapter where the duties of the queen are described was written much earlier in the ninth-century, possibly for Bernard of Italy and his wife Cunigond circa 812-13 or in the first years of the reign of Louis the Pious.

'As to the running of the palace in fitting and suitably splendid fashion, especially in regard to the king's royal gear and the annual gifts for the king's warriors, apart from their food, drink and horses: all this was the queen's responsibility, and, under her, the chamberlain's. It was their job to check supplies of everything and and make provision in good time for future requirements so that nothing should ever be lacking the moment it was needed. Gifts to the various foreign embassies were the concern of the chamberlain, but the king sometimes gave orders that something was better dealt with by the queen and himself. The queen and chamberlain took care of all these arrangements so that the lord king should be free of all household or palace worries, in so far as he reasonably and honourably could be, committing his hope in God the

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<sup>3</sup> *DOP*, cap III, p. 54; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> The case is made in detail by B Kasten, *Adalhard von Corbie: Die Biographie eines karolingischen Politikers und Klostervorstehers*, Dusseldorf (1986), pp. 72-84. Kasten makes the following points: that the *DOP* is similar in organisation and style to Adalhard's statutes for Corbie; the late winter and early Spring assemblies prescribed in the text match the pattern in the reign of Louis the Pious; Adalhard was influenced by his time as regent in Italy for Pippin I, and his son Bernard, for whom he may have intended the work in 812-13. See also H H Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit*, Bonner Historische Forschungen, 32 (Bonn), 1968, pp. 288 ff.



almighty so that he should always keep his mind ready to deal with the government of the realm as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

This passage is a prescription for queenship rather than an observed description of a queen's duties. But if it can be dated to the beginning of the reign of Louis the Pious then it shows that the queen was now understood as essential to royal government. Here was an institutionalised relationship with both the chamberlain and the soldiers of the *scola*, the young men who matured into the counts, and abbots, who ruled the empire. The queen's access to treasure was routine; she and the chamberlain facilitated the royal itinerary, a function that closely replicates the queen's intervention on the royal estates in *de villis*. But above all the queen is made responsible for the symbolic representation of kingship itself in her care of the royal gear, the splendour and munificence of the palace and the reception of foreign rulers and their embassies. And although Adalhard belittles the domestic cares of the palace, the reality, acknowledged elsewhere in the text, was that the royal household was the political centre of the realm itself.

Adalhard's script for a queen in an ideal royal household provides a context for Judith's career in the 820s, a decade when contemporary sources are few. The palace annals are the main source for this period. Family affairs, in particular Louis' dealings with his sons, Judith's step-sons, are a major theme of the annals in the years before the birth of Charles the Bald. Changes in Louis' relationship with the sons of Irmengard had a direct bearing on Judith's status; any sons she might bear the

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<sup>5</sup> ' *De honestate vero palatii seu specialiter ornamento regali nec non et de donis annuis militum, absque cibo et potu vel aquis, ad reginam praecipue et sub ipsa ad camerarium pertinebat, et secundum cuiusque rei qualitatem ipsorum sollicitudo erat, ut tempore congruo semper futura prospicerent, ne quid, dum opusesset, ullatenus oportuno tempore defuisset. De donis vero diversarum legationum ad camerarium aspiciebat, nisi forte iubente rege tale aliquid esset, quod reginae ad tractandum cum ipso congrueret. Haec autem omnia et his similia eo intendebant, ut ab omni sollicitudine domestica vel palatina, in quantum rationabiliter et honeste esse poterat, domnus rex omnipotenti Deo spem suam indesinenter committens ad totius regni statum ordinandum vel conservandum animum semper suum promptum haberet.* DOP, cap. V, pp. 72-4. The translation is by Janet Nelson, see her comments on this passage and the importance of the queen's care of royal gear in, 'Medieval Queenship', pp. 199-200.

emperor would be in competition with their half-brothers for Louis' favour and a share in the *regnum Francorum*. At a small assembly at Nijmegen in May 821 the emperor reviewed and reaffirmed the *Ordinatio* of 817 and oaths of allegiance were sworn to its provisions by those present.<sup>6</sup> What new circumstances had prompted Louis to restate, publicly, the four-year old succession arrangements? An affirmation of the *Ordinatio* was tantamount to a positive restatement of Lothar's position. Bernhard von Simson drew attention to the presence of papal emissaries at Nijmegen and at Thionville in October, where the *Ordinatio* was also presented to the large assembly, suggesting a desire on Louis' part to avail himself of papal approval: whereas Francois Louis Ganshof saw Louis seeking to reconcile elements, such as Bernard's supporters, still opposed to the settlement.<sup>7</sup> There is perhaps another dimension to the confirmation of the family settlement of 817 that touches Lothar's interests more closely. In May 821 an event in the royal family may have caused the emperor to reassure his eldest son, publicly, about his future.

There may be a connection between the confirmation and the birth of Judith's first child Gisela in the spring of 821.<sup>8</sup> Gisela was a distinctive Carolingian name; Judith's daughter was named after Charlemagne's sister, the abbess of Chelles in the early ninth century where she had probably written or commissioned a history of the Carolingian family.<sup>9</sup> As a female, Gisela had no claims to a kingdom and in that sense posed no threat to Lothar's position. But she was a messenger of another kind: she was certainly proof positive of her mother's fertility and it was now probable that Judith and Louis would have more children. Any future sons would be able to make claims on kingdoms. This was a principle that the *Ordinatio* itself reinforced through

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<sup>6</sup> *ARF* an 821, p. 155. For the text see MGH Capit. I, 136, pp. 270-3.

<sup>7</sup> Simson, *Jahrbücher*, pp. 166 ff; F L Ganshof, 'Some Observations on the "Ordinatio Imperii" of 817', *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, transl. J. Sondheimer, London, (1971) p. 280.

<sup>8</sup> It is not possible to date Gisela's birth or her marriage to Eberhard of Friuli but it has been widely accepted that she was born before Charles. The evidence has been assembled Werner, 'Die Nachkommen', p. 447.

<sup>9</sup> See above, Introduction.

its exclusion of all royal kin save Louis' legitimate sons. At Nijmegen the emperor was letting Lothar, his brothers, and the aristocracy, know that for the time being he was content to leave arrangements as they were. Lothar needed this reassurance if the emperor already entertained plans of sending him out of Francia to rule Italy.

At the full assembly at Thionville in October the emperor also took steps to reconcile his collateral kin, and their followers, who had been excluded under its provisions. He recalled his cousins Wala and Adalhard, suspected of disloyalty in 814, and an amnesty was declared for those who had supported his nephew Bernard in the unsuccessful coup of winter 817.<sup>10</sup> At Thionville Louis offered Lothar another inducement for his continued 'good behaviour' in the form of his marriage to Irmengard, daughter of count Hugh of Tours.<sup>11</sup> Lothar's role since becoming co-emperor with his father in 817, was ambiguous. If he was given any extra sphere of activity by Louis the sources do not mention it. There is no evidence to suggest that he was not still living in his father's household, where Judith, his stepmother, was now mistress. What marriage represented was independent status, the foundation of a separate palace and his own centre of patronage.<sup>12</sup> Whatever the necessary arrangements involved, Lothar had a separate itinerary from October 821, albeit under the guidance of his father, who sent the newly-weds to winter at Worms. Aachen, the *sedes regni*, was reserved for Louis and Judith, who spent Christmas there. The twelve months that followed was 'the year of the two empresses', and a double itinerary in Francia.<sup>13</sup>

The provisioning of two itinerant royal households must have placed some strain on resources, household organization and indeed the relationship between father and

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<sup>10</sup> *ARF*, an 821, p. 156; Astron, cap. 21, p. 348. See also L Weinrich, *Wala, Monch, Graf und Rebel; Die Biographie eines Karolingers*, Lubeck and Hamburg, (1963) pp. 33-39. For Bernard's revolt see above, chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> *ARF*, an 821, p. 156 with Thegan, cap. 28, p. 216. For Hugh and his family see F Vollmer, 'Die Etichonen', in *Studien und Vorarbeiten*, p. 163 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Lothar's early career makes an interesting contrast with that of Charlemagne's eldest son, the young Charles, who appears to have remained unmarried: Classen, 'Karl der Grosse', pp. 110-33, 120-1.

<sup>13</sup> *ARF*, an 821, p. 156.



son.<sup>14</sup> This difficult state of affairs was resolved at the assembly of Attigny in August 822, where Louis completed the process of familial reconciliation begun at Thionville. He performed public penance for the blinding and death of Bernard and the illegal tonsure of his half-brothers.<sup>15</sup> Although penitent, Louis still enjoyed the profits of his sin. Bernard, of course, remained dead despite his uncle's remorse. The public act of reconciliation with Bernard's supporters enabled Louis to send Lothar and Irmengard to Italy, which he did directly the assembly was over in mid-September, in company with his kinsman Wala.<sup>16</sup> The final family business transacted at Attigny was the marriage of Pippin to Ringart, daughter of the count of Madrie.<sup>17</sup>

Was Judith at Attigny? It was, after all, a public occasion: maybe she fulfilled a queenly role as mediator, which would fit the mood of reconciliation. There is another argument for suggesting her presence at Louis' side: it was about nine months later, on 13th June 823, that she gave birth to her only son.<sup>18</sup> In November Louis, and the now pregnant Judith, crossed the Rhine and wintered at Frankfurt, marking a clear break in the itinerary hitherto.<sup>19</sup> Judith had her baby the following summer in the newly refurbished palace at Frankfurt. The long stay there suggested by the itinerary means that she was able to remain in one place throughout her pregnancy.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For the co-ordination of the royal villas with the needs of an itinerant court and for the organization of the household itself, see Capitulary *de villis*, MGH Capit. 1, no. 32, pp. 82-91; *DOP*, cap. 5, pp. 72-4.

<sup>15</sup> *ARF*, an 822, p. 158; Astron, cap. 35, p. 406. Thegan was at pains to distance Louis from responsibility for Bernard's death, cap. 23, p. 212. See above chapter 1 at note 18.

<sup>16</sup> *ARF*, an 822, p. 159; Weinrich, *Wala*, p. 43ff.

<sup>17</sup> *ARF*, an 822, p. 159; Werner, 'Die Nachkommen' pp. 446-47.

<sup>18</sup> The dates just fit, assuming that Charles was a full term baby. The court was still at Attigny on 11 September, from whence it moved later in the month for a seasonal hunt in the Ardennes: *BM*<sup>2</sup>, nos. 759-63. For his date of birth see Tessier, 147, p. 389.

<sup>19</sup> Simson, *Jahrbücher*, p. 187. Louis had not crossed the Rhine since 815.

<sup>20</sup> T Zotz, *Die Deutschen Königspfalzen*, vol I: Göttingen, (1985), Frankfurt, pp. 160-63, 183-88; Cf. the experience of Charles the Bald's wife, Richildis, *AB* an 876, pp. 209-10.



Of course there were political reasons for the itinerary's shift eastwards. The annalist describes the assembly at Frankfurt in November 822 as being necessary for the discussion of matters relating to the eastern part of the empire, and the early May assembly, again at Frankfurt, was to enable the attendance of the emperor's leading men not only from Francia but also 'from east Francia and Saxony, Bavaria, Alemannia and those regions of Alemannia co-terminous with Burgundy and the adjacent Rhineland regions'.<sup>21</sup> But the choice of Frankfurt, a place of comfort and security, for Judith's confinement might at the same time indicate Louis' solicitude for Judith and his unborn child. Could it be that Louis was prepared to do all in his power to see that Judith was delivered safely of a son?

The birth of Charles has been an issue central to discussions of the decade in modern historiography yet sources from the 820s do not find the event significant.<sup>22</sup> In order to discuss the birth of Judith's son we are dependent on later material, Nithard in particular, and indebted to Charles' commemoration of his own birthday at royal monasteries for the actual date. Over forty years later he recounted in a letter to Pope Nicholas I how Judith had sought to protect him in the first minutes of his life. In 'the moment of our birth' she had sent a ring to Archbishop Ebo of Reims, childhood playmate of the emperor, entreating him to pray for her and her child.<sup>23</sup> Queens, like other ninth century women, might die in childbed with their infants. Fear of death at this time, both in labour and the days that followed, was real, despite the care and attention that would attend a royal birth and the comforts of Frankfurt. But the message of the ring was not only one of prayer but also of friendship. In adversity Ebo was to return the ring to Judith and she would plead his cause. The letter offers a vivid glimpse of the ways open to a queen to win friends and extend her influence. What is revealed is the intimate nature of queenly patronage. The ring was more than a precious artefact of gold and stones: it may have come from Judith's hand, and had a

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<sup>21</sup> *ARF*, an 822, p. 159; an 823, p. 160.

<sup>22</sup> Dümmler, *Geschichte*, pp. 43-6; Simson, *Jahrbücher*, pp. 198-201; Halphen, *Charlemagne et l'empire*, pp. 180 ff.; Schieffer, 'Die Krise', p. 10. But now see Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>23</sup> Charles to Pope Nicholas I, *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, ed, M Bouquet, Paris (1870), vol 7, pp. 556-9.

value as a token of remembrance and a promise of future support. Ebo was a great man. Judith was trying to bind the emperor's friends to her son.<sup>24</sup> The ring also signifies the creation of mutual obligations; the queen was able to offer something in return. Judith could not bind men to her with *honores* and benefices but she could intercede with the emperor on behalf of suitors. The queen had a special role that went beyond her ability to act as an *ambasciator* in diplomas, which was open to other *palatini*. Judith could sue for mercy and by the gift of a ring was offering Ebo a voice at court that might be heard above the clamour of his enemies. During the next ten years the ring was to pass backwards and forwards between them.

Gift-giving, prayer, and the friendship of an archbishop, these were Judith's means of protecting her son. His father, the emperor, took more positive steps by making Lothar stand as godfather to his new brother. It is only Nithard, writing in 841, who describes the emperor's motives at length.

'When Charles was born, his father did not know what to do for him, since he had already divided the empire between the other sons. Then the anxious father asked his sons on behalf of this son. At last Lothar consented on oath, that the father should give to him [Charles] any portion of the kingdom he wanted, and moreover, that he [Lothar], would be his minder and protector against all his enemies both now and in the future. He confirmed this with an oath.'<sup>25</sup>

Here Nithard is being deliberately ingenuous. This is a version of the family politics of the 820s, written up in 841 to best serve Charles the Bald's cause in the current round of internecine strife.<sup>26</sup> What Nithard is suggesting is that Louis had not envisaged providing for any future son by Judith and, furthermore, was not confident

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<sup>24</sup> For his early career see P. McKeon, 'Archbishop Ebo of Rheims (816-835): A Study in the Carolingian Empire and Church', *Church History*, 43 (1974) pp. 437-47; S. Airlie, 'Bonds of Power and Bonds of Association in the Court Circle of Louis the Pious' in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 191-204.

<sup>25</sup> Nithard, 1, cap. 3, p 8.

<sup>26</sup> J L Nelson, 'Public "Histories" and Private History in the Work of Nithard', *Speculum*, 60 (1985) pp. 251-93, 255 ff.

of success in managing his sons. Political motives apart, Louis' marriage to Judith suggests a desire for more heirs; as for his sons by Irmengard, his actions towards them since 814 seem designed to keep them on tenterhooks. The emperor made them dance to his tune. They all married late, well into their twenties.<sup>27</sup> Although he assigned them kingdoms, Louis directed their movements, summoned them to assemblies and to defend the empire at his command.<sup>28</sup> And he played them off, one against the other. Pippin and the young Louis were 'outraged' at their treatment under the *Ordinatio*, which gave them no share of Francia and favoured Lothar at their expense.<sup>29</sup> The infant Charles was not a fresh cause of conflict to a hitherto harmonious family: Lothar and his siblings were already in conflict with one another before he arrived on the scene. It is hard to avoid the impression that throughout the 820s Louis the Pious treated them as if he knew this.

Lothar's promise to protect Charles is mentioned twice in the passage by Nithard so that later he can stress how Lothar had reneged on his obligations at every possible opportunity. Nithard follows this sentence with remarks on the role of Hugh and Matfred in causing Lothar to disregard his promise. 'But at the urging of Hugh, whose daughter he had married, of Matfred, and of others, he later repented what he had done and sought for ways by which he could nullify his action'.<sup>30</sup> This passage

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<sup>27</sup> Lothar was 26, Pippin 25 and Louis a comparatively young 21. Their delayed marriages contrast with that of their father, whom Charlemagne married off at the age of 16. See Werner, 'Die Nachkommen', pp. 446-47.

<sup>28</sup> Details of the emperor's tight rein can be found in the *ARF*, for example an 825, pp. 167-8; an 826, p 169; an 827, p 173, an 828, pp. 174-5. Pippin's rule of Aquitaine: J. Martindale, 'Charles the Bald and the Government of Aquitaine', in *Court and Kingdom*, pp. 115-138, at pp. 122-25, R. Collins, 'Pippin I and the Kingdom of Aquitaine' in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 363-390; Lothar: J. Jarnut, 'Ludwig der Fromme, Lothar I und das regnum Italiae', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 349-362. Louis the German: G. Eiten, *Das Unterkönigtum im Reiche der Merovinger und Carolinger*, Heidelberger Abhandlungen zur mittleren und neueren Geschichte, 18; Heidelberg, (1907) pp. 114 ff. Reuter, *Germany*, pp. 70-98 *passim*. See now the more recent study of B Kasten, *Königssöhne und Königsherrschaft*, MGH Schriften, 44, Hanover, (1997), pp. 165-98.

<sup>29</sup> Thegan, cap. 21, p 210.

<sup>30</sup> Nithard, I, cap. 3, p 8. Matfred was at Frankfurt on 12 June 823, Sickel, L196, p 142; Thegan, cap. 28, p 216.



has been used as evidence for a 'party' forming around Lothar in 823 to protect his interests against the claims of Charles and Judith.<sup>31</sup> Here, as earlier, Nithard shows himself a real historian; selecting the facts to suit his argument. He is also telescoping the time-scale of events. No evidence from the 820s links Hugh and Matfred with any grievance Lothar may have had against his father in 823. Indeed Ermold's vignette of the status quo at court in June 826 suggests quite a different interpretation.

Thus far Nithard has focused exclusively on Charles and his father; now he brings in Charles' mother, not as an actor in these negotiations but as a shrewd observer of Lothar's change of heart. 'This did not escape the attention of the father and the mother so from then on Lothar sought secretly to destroy what his father had arranged'.<sup>32</sup> In 823 there was actually very little Judith could do for her son apart from beginning to gather friends on his behalf. Nithard's next statement is that Bernard was called to court (the annals report this under 829), to protect Charles' interests against the schemes of Lothar and company.<sup>33</sup> This linking of Bernard's appointment as chamberlain with Lothar's change of heart again contracts events to suggest a polarization of factions in the household from 823. If Nithard's chronology is revised a different picture emerges.

This critique of Nithard is not to suggest that the birth of Charles the Bald had no immediate repercussions in the royal family but to caution against interpreting the event as the cause of rigid factions in the palace. Lothar and his brothers would naturally have been less than happy at the prospect of their new brother's claims on the Carolingian fisc. But these sibling rivalries were the stuff of family politics and always had been. It was Judith, Charles' mother, whose status and prestige changed dramatically. The nature of the relationship between a queen and her son in a society

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<sup>31</sup> On 'party politics' in the 820s see above note 22 and Boshof, *Erzbischof Agobard*, pp. 102 ff, 195, 198.

<sup>32</sup> Nithard, 1, cap. 3, pp. 8-10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*; *ARF*, p. 177.



with no established principle of primogeniture has been emphasised by Pauline Stafford.<sup>34</sup> Mother and son depended on one another for their political future. The inherent problem of which son or sons should succeed was aggravated where a king had sons by more than one wife. A second wife like Judith with grown step-sons, and, at the time her son was born, a middle-aged husband, was in a precarious position. Her future as a royal widow might be insecure and hazardous at the hands of step-sons who had no familial or political concern in her welfare. Judith had a fundamental interest in the endowment of Charles with a share of the *regnum Francorum*. The power to effect this, however, lay with Louis. In the sources for the 820s the emphasis on Judith's relationship with her son is not a reflection of what Ernst Dümmler characterised as obsessive, blind *Mutterliebe* but instead a recognition of where her, and Charles', interests lay.<sup>35</sup> Judith's political motivation was no more or less emotive than other players in Carolingian politics.

Judith's maternal devotion and close association with her son are first celebrated by Ermold in his account of the lavish reception afforded the Danish king Herold by the emperor and empress at the Frankish court in June 826. The intervening years are dark. The palace annals omit the birth of Judith's son in 823 but record Judith meeting her husband at Rouen on 17th November 824 when Louis returned from his campaign against the Bretons; a stark illustration of how sparse the evidence can be.<sup>36</sup> At Rouen, the imperial couple received ambassadors from the Byzantine court in Constantinople. The reception of an embassy from Constantinople, which could be on a lavish scale, was clearly an event of tremendous significance to the royal household and one that required thought and preparation. It seems to have been the practice in Constantinople for foreign ambassadors to be invited to witness important state rituals.<sup>37</sup> At the very least then, the Greeks would probably have expected to be greeted at the Frankish court by an emperor with an empress at his side. Gifts to

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<sup>34</sup> Stafford, *Queens*, p. 143 ff; *idem*, 'Sons and Mothers', pp. 79-100.

<sup>35</sup> Dümmler, *Geschichte*, p 181.

<sup>36</sup> *ARF*, an 824, p 165.

<sup>37</sup> McCormick, 'Byzantium', p. 374.

foreign embassies were designated as the responsibility of the chamberlain by Adalhard in *DOP*, but he had also envisaged occasions when the king would decide that these matters were better dealt with by the queen and himself.<sup>38</sup> An embassy from the imperial court in Constantinople was surely just such a special case which required the correct and most splendid representation of royal rule. And Adalhard had himself stressed the queen's special association with the magnificence of the palace.<sup>39</sup> This was also a presentation of kingship which was premised on Christian marriage and the need for a queen at the centre of the royal household.

We can enrich our perspective on Judith in the middle years of the decade, where there is a lack of contemporary evidence, by turning to consider Judith's family, particularly her female kin, and how her elevation had repercussions for their relationship with the royal house. First, Heilwig, Judith's mother and a member of the Saxon nobility who, as a result of her daughter's marriage, achieved a position of prestige and authority usually reserved for the women of the Frankish royal family. Thegan certainly emphasised Heilwig's noble lineage and she may have been a member of the 'Kobbonid' family who had connections with Corvey, but in the early ninth century Saxony was still at the frontier of Frankish rule, a region only recently Christianised.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, in 825 Heilwig ascended to a position at the very heart of Frankish monarchy when she became abbess of Chelles, an ancient royal house held at one time by Charlemagne's sister Gisela, and the earthly resting place of the bones of the saint and queen Balthild. Chelles had important associations with Carolingian rule and was not to be given away lightly. It was a centre of learning and, so it has been argued, the writing of Carolingian history.<sup>41</sup> The abbess also controlled and managed substantial resources which could be useful to Louis and his youngest son. The appointment of Heilwig at Chelles may have been part of Judith's plans for

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<sup>38</sup> See above, note 5.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> As suggested by Wenskus, see above chapter 1, at note 71.

<sup>41</sup> See above, Introduction,

her future retirement as royal widow, as well as indicative of her present concern for her mother's welfare. Heilwig also had a unique identification with the new regime in the royal household and with her grandson Charles. Aunts and grandmothers, especially when they have the resources of wealthy monastic houses at their disposal can be formidable champions of younger male relatives and their support worth courting and maintaining.<sup>42</sup> But perhaps the most important function of Heilwig's role was as the guardian of Balthild's cult. In 833 she translated the saint's relics to a new and more magnificent tomb on the orders of the emperor.<sup>43</sup>

Judith's sister Emma also became a Carolingian in 827 by marrying the young Louis. The Bavarian-Alamannian and Saxon connections of Emma's family must have been what attracted the young king of Bavaria, an 'active sub-king' in the region since 825.<sup>44</sup> The career of Queen Emma is obscure. There is, however, one occasion on which it may be possible to see Judith and Emma acting together and to discern a family interest, that is in the endowment of Corvey in Saxony, their mother's homeland. According to a twelfth century *catalogus*, Judith requested the estates granted to Corvey by the emperor in the mid-820s: a similar endowment by the young Louis, which must be post-827, was requested by Emma.<sup>45</sup> No similar evidence connects Judith's brothers Conrad and Rudolf with Corvey. Welf died before 824 and has left little trace in the sources; his sons are conspicuous by their absence from the sources in the 820s. It is hard to suggest any *honores* that might have come their way as a result of their new royal connection. It has been a part of the argument for Judith heading a party in the 820s that she promoted her family ruthlessly. There is little evidence for this because information on the 'Welfs' in the

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<sup>42</sup> For Gisela at Chelles see *AM*, an 804, p. 92.

<sup>43</sup> *Ex translatione s. Baltechildis*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SS 1, pp. 284-5. See below chapter 5.

<sup>44</sup> For the marriage, *AX*, an 827, p. 7; Reuter, *Germany*, p. 50 but cf. Eiten, *Das Unterkönigtum* p. 117 ff;

<sup>45</sup> *Catalogus abbatum et nomina fratrum Corbiensium*, ed. O Holder-Egger, MGH SS 13, p. 275; however the surviving copy of the grant of Eresburg omits the *ambasciator* clause, *Die Kaiserkunden der Provinz Westfalen 777-1313*, ed. R. Wilmans, Münster, (1867) I, 9, p. 25.



early ninth century is so sparse.<sup>46</sup> Conrad and Rudolf first appear under the 830 annal in the *Annals of St. Bertin* when, like Judith, they were imprisoned by the rebels. The fact that they were targeted in 830 suggests involvement in politics and that the brothers were closely identified with the hated Judith. But we do not know when they were called to court and we cannot assume that they were in the palace throughout the decade.<sup>47</sup> This contrast between the experiences of the male and female members of Judith's family in the 820s may be one of gender. Promotion of male relatives might not be accomplished without resentment and political tension as Conrad and Rudolf were to discover during the events of 830. Perhaps a queen's female kin could be more easily assimilated than the male into the royal family as they were not asking for *honores* and could serve the Carolingians as wives, as mothers, and as nuns who prayed for the fortune of the dynasty and the souls of its members both living and dead.

The evidence presented thus far for Judith's career in the 820s has been largely circumstantial or, in the case of the birth of Charles the Bald, derived from much later sources. It is Ermold, writing in 827/8, who provides the first detailed account of Judith fulfilling a recognizable function as queen in Louis' household in book IV of his verse biography, *In honorem Hludowici*.<sup>48</sup> The poem was written at Strasbourg where the poet had been exiled by Louis from the entourage of Pippin of Aquitaine. Ermold's crimes are unspecified in the poem which constituted an eloquent plea for his return to favour. In the closing lines he addressed himself directly to the empress and threw himself on her mercy.

'And you most beautiful Judith and worthy wife,  
Who rightly hold the reins of the empire with him,

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<sup>46</sup> For Judith's siblings see note 4, and G. Tellenbach, 'Über die ältesten Welfen in West- und Ostfrankreich', in *Studien und Vorarbeiten*; Calmette, *L'Effondrement*, p. 31.

<sup>47</sup> *AB*, an 830, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> On the problem of dating the poem see Faral, Ermold, p. viii; P. Godman, 'Louis the Pious and his Poets', *FMS* 19 (1985), at p. 255 with note 60; P. Godman, *Poets and Emperors: Politics and Carolingian Poetry*, Oxford, (1987) p. 107 ff, pp. 123-5.



Help one who has fallen, console a wretch,  
 Raise him up and deliver him from prison.<sup>49</sup>

Judith's prominence in this work stems from Ermold's focus on the royal household. Ermold's chosen view of the court in Book IV is the baptism of the Danish king Herold and his entourage at Ingelheim in June 826, where he describes a heathen people receiving the benefits of civilization through acceptance of Frankish rule and Christianity. The events at Ingelheim and the hunt that follows are used by Ermold to present a 'showcase' of the Frankish court and the magnificence of Louis' rule. The portrayal of Judith, his 'worthy wife', is a constituent and essential part of this idealised model.<sup>50</sup>

The ceremonies at Ingelheim commenced with the emperor, empress and Lothar standing as godparents to the Danish royal family. The twinning by rank among the *proceres*.<sup>51</sup> Ermold takes care from his first glance at Judith to notice her good looks; she made a pretty godmother to the Danish queen. But then queens are usually beautiful in the eyes of beholders who need their patronage.<sup>52</sup> The imperial couple showered their godchildren with gifts of suits of golden clothes. Ermold offers a detailed description of Judith's gift to the Danish queen at length: it was studded with precious gems and 'worked with the skill of Minerva'. The golden costume is a further example of queenly largesse and the cementing of relationships with gifts.<sup>53</sup> Here indeed was an example on a grand scale of the queen's responsibility, as Adalhard had proposed, in displaying the magnificence of Frankish rule.

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<sup>49</sup> Ermold, vv 2644-9, p. 200. Compare these lines with his invocation to the Virgin Mary at vv 2620-7, p. 198.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, v 2644, p. 200.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 2234-47, pp.170-2; A. Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe: Kaiser, Könige und Päpste als geistliche Patrone in der abendlandischen Missiongeschichte*, Arbeiten zur Frühmittelalterforschung, 15, Berlin and New York, (1984), for Herold's baptism see pp. 215-23 and for a Byzantine precedent, p. 5 ff. The annalist locates the baptism at Mainz, not Ingelheim: *ARF*, an 826, pp. 169-70.

<sup>52</sup> Judith is the 'pulchra induperatrix': Ermold, v. 2242, p. 170.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 2254 ff., p. 172, and for Judith's gift to the Danish queen, vv. 2266-75, pp. 172-4.

The imperial entourage is then described as forming into a procession to enter the basilica for solemn mass. The emperor led, accompanied by three high-ranking court officials: arch-chaplain Hilduin, Helisachar, arch-chancellor and Gerung the keeper of the doors.<sup>54</sup> Lothar followed his father with Herold, who was dressed in a toga. The aura of solemnity Ermold has been so careful to build up was then broken suddenly by the three-year old Charles running ahead of the adults.<sup>55</sup> Ermold, by glancing at Judith's son, introduces the empress and her retinue. She shimmered forward in imperial magnificence with loyal supporters at her side:

'Twin magnates, Hugh and Matfred accompanied her with honour,  
Wearing diadems and shining golden clothes  
They honour their virtuous lady.'<sup>56</sup>

Ermold's choice of the twin magnates as Judith's guard of honour was surely not fortuitous. Unlike the chamberlain Tanculf, no special offices linked them to the empress.<sup>57</sup> But Ermold must have assumed that Judith would welcome the association with Hugh and Matfred. If the poet wanted to return from exile he could not afford to offend or to be misunderstood. This suggests that he was writing before the two counts were suspected of military incompetence in the Spanish March in 827 and were deprived of their *honores* in February 828.<sup>58</sup> So Ermold's poetic portrait of Judith honoured at court by Hugh and Matfred was written very close in time to June 826 and the baptism at Ingelheim. What can we make of this? Even taking full

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<sup>54</sup> Airlie, 'Bonds', pp. 196-7.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 2280-301, pp. 174-6.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 2303-4, p. 176.

<sup>57</sup> Ardo, *Vita Benedicti*, cap. 42, p. 219. Tanculf, chamberlain in the 820s, does not have a high profile in the contemporary sources. See an 826, *ARF*, p. 170 where he is mentioned in the context of the organ constructed at Aachen.

<sup>58</sup> *ARF*, an 827, p. 173, and an 828, p. 174. For an analysis of these years see F.L. Ganshof, 'Am Vorabend der Ersten Krise der Regierung Ludwigs des Frommen: Die Jahre 828 und 829', *FMS*, 6 (1972) pp. 39-54, 40-1; cf Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 80-81

account of dramatic licence, these few lines do seem to belie a notion that rigid, factional alignments were in place within the royal palace. Hugh and Matfred had connections with Lothar but these, apparently, did not preclude a close association with the empress. Political relationships in the palace were complex and subtle; Judith had taken care to associate herself with influential men in the palace whoever they were.

Once the baptismal mass was over, so Ermold says, the royal party retired to the hall, where 'Joyously the emperor sat down and motioned the lovely Judith to his side and she kissed the king's knees.'<sup>59</sup> This act of wifely 'homage' is explicable in terms of the construction of the work as a whole because it is mirrored by a passage in Book III, where Ermold recounts at length Louis' 818 campaign against the Bretons. The emperor began with diplomacy and sent Witcharius as an envoy to Murmanus, the Breton 'king'. Louis offered peace, in return for tribute and an end to border hostilities. Witcharius impressed upon the Bretons the futility of resisting the Christian Franks and their king.<sup>60</sup> Murmanus was on the point of succumbing to this prudent counsel when he was rudely halted by the very physical interruption of his wife. She emerged from her chamber and embraced her husband.

'The first kiss she poured on his knees, then on his neck,

She kissed his beard, she kissed his mouth and his hands.'<sup>61</sup>

This erotic intervention had the effect of short-circuiting the rational powers, and political judgement, of the Breton king. Murmanus' attention was now distracted and so his wife proceeded to argue, successfully, against the peace negotiations.<sup>62</sup> But moral retribution was swift. Murmanus was killed in the ensuing conflict because,

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<sup>59</sup> Ermold, v. 2354, p. 180.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. vv. 1324ff., p.104; iii. vv. 1370ff. p.106; iii. vv. 1405-6, p.108; Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, pp.122-3.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 1416-21, p.110; for the episode, knee-kissing at vv. 1420-1; '*perfida coniunx*', v.1418.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 1438ff., p. 110.



'He put too much trust in his wife's words'.<sup>63</sup> The Danes' submission to Louis in Book IV and their acceptance of Frankish overlordship and religion stands in dramatic contrast to the Breton experience. Ermold's treatment of Murmanus' 'perfidious wife' serves as a perfect foil to his appreciation of Judith, 'the worthy wife'. Knee-kissing is a gesture of good faith subverted by the Breton woman to dominate her husband and bend him to her will. Judith performs the same act in a formal, court context as a proper expression of wifely submission and loyalty.<sup>64</sup>

Ermold's final presentation of the court is at a hunt. Judith rode out from Ingelheim in a throng of young men. (Are these the palatine *milites* who received their *dona annua* from the queen?<sup>65</sup>) Ermold uses the hunt to draw attention to the relationship between mother and son. Peter Godman has shown how Ermold has even adapted his model of the hunt in *Aeneid IV*, where Dido arranges a hunt for Aeneas and his men, to centre attention on Judith's son where in Virgil it moved back to *pius Aeneas*.<sup>66</sup> The precocious three-year-old demanded to join in the hunt with his father but his 'beautiful mother', with the help of an unidentified tutor, restrained him. In the end he had his own way and was allowed to strike a small beast caught for this purpose.<sup>67</sup> Such heroism calls forth from the poet praise for a child blessed with the virtue of his father, the name of his grandfather and who also reflects the pride of his mother,

'Like Apollo resplendent in progress through the heights of Delos

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 1746-7, p. 132.

<sup>64</sup> There are other acts of knee-kissing in the poem but none correspond so closely with this context: ii. vv. 875-6, pp.68-70; iii. vv. 1294-5, p. 100.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 2378, p.182. The poetic model here is *Karolus Magnus et Leo Papa*, where the author describes Charlemagne's women riding out in a throng of young men from Aachen: ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Poetae, 1, vv.177ff., 270ff.

<sup>66</sup> P. Godman, 'Latin Poetry under Charles the Bald and Carolingian Poetry', in M Gibson and J L Nelson, with D Ganz (eds.) *Charles the Bald: court and kingdom*, British Archaeological Reports, Oxford, (1981), pp. 299-300, with a commentary and transl. for vv. 2380-414.

<sup>67</sup> Ermold, vv. 2409-11, p. 184.



Bringing great joy to Latona his mother.<sup>68</sup>

The direct appeal to Judith's tender maternal feelings here is a consequence of Ermold's plea for her favour. The maternal pride with which Judith glows is another of the proper queenly virtues he has been careful to attribute to her.<sup>69</sup> We have now seen her, successively, in regal splendour as the munificent giver of gifts, the *honesta domina*; as the loyal knee-kissing wife; and as the pretty tender-hearted mother.

The last cameo of Judith's queenship displays her skilful management of the household. Judith organized a *fête champêtre* for the court: a covered bower has been constructed 'prudently' and refreshments provided for the huntsmen. The magnificence of the palace, the queen's indoor milieu, has been transported to the open air. The emperor and empress dined at a table seated on golden chairs. The slaughtered animals were displayed, the spoils divided, and so the royal party returned to court.<sup>70</sup>

Ermold praises Judith for fulfilling a queenly role that tallies with the duties in the *De ordine palatii* which are defined as the queen's responsibility.<sup>71</sup> Ermold closes with his plea for clemency. He perceives that an appeal to Judith is a line of direct access to the emperor. We are reminded of Ebo, to whom the empress had opened a special route to imperial favour through the gift of a ring.

Ermold's picture of the court as is of an ordered and harmonious environment with all given their appointed place. Its static harmony, the absence of conflict and competition is what makes it unreal. The tranquillity that surrounds Louis and Judith in the poem was shattered in reality by the fall of Hugh and Matfred. The diplomas of the later 820s do, to some extent, show a changed pattern of influence in high places.

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<sup>68</sup> Godman, 'Latin Poetry', p. 300.

<sup>69</sup> On Judith's 'Mütterliebe' see *ibid.* and Ermold, p. viii.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 2414 ff., pp. 184 ff. for the royal picnic.

<sup>71</sup> See Stafford, *Queens*, p. 99 ff.

Matfred had acted as an *ambasciator* in diplomas between 815 and 825, particularly on behalf of St. Gall: Bishop Bernold of Strasbourg and count Ercingar obtained Matfred's patronage at court in a diploma of June 823 to secure an exchange of lands in Alsace.<sup>72</sup> In March 828, a month after the dishonour of Hugh and Matfred, Judith appears as an *ambasciator* for the first time, on behalf of Count Ercingar and Abbot Waldo of Schwarzach.<sup>73</sup> Political crisis in the palace had deprived Ercingar of Matfred's patronage and so an existing nexus between palace and locality, that is between Matfred and Alsace, had been severed. Ercingar, and others like him seeking power-brokers in the palace, had now to find other patrons. Hugh and Matfred may have fallen from a position of favour near the emperor but Judith remained at court. Ercingar and Waldo chose Judith as their intercessor because she was clearly in a position to obtain patronage on their behalf.

Just as Ercingar needed Judith's favour so the emperor and empress stood in need of patronage. It was as important to have the most powerful of heaven's *procures*, the saints and martyrs, to plead one's cause in the celestial court as it was in the imperial palace. The saints, the aristocracy of heaven, were the mediators of salvation. Einhard obtained the relics of saints Marcellinus and Petrus from Rome and brought them to Aachen for forty days over Easter 828, where they attracted widespread and enthusiastic devotion and worked many miracles.<sup>74</sup> Such powerful intercessors needed to be associated with the royal house. The imperial couple bound themselves to Einhard's saints with lavish gifts which again distinguish the different types of largesse open to them. Louis gave estates; Judith gave her jewelled girdle which weighed three pounds.<sup>75</sup> A gift that calls to mind Balthild's donation of her royal

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<sup>72</sup> Sickel, L196, p. 142; L54, p. 100; L107, p. 116; L165, p. 133; L184, p. 139; L198, p. 143; L217, p. 149 with p. 329. For Matfred see Depreux, *Prosopographie*, 199, pp. 329-31.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, L256, p. 161.

<sup>74</sup> *ARF*, an 827, p. 174. Einhard, *Translatio et miracula ss. Marcellini et Petri*, ed. O Holder Egger, MGH SS 15, pp. 239-64.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

girdle, to Lagobert as alms for the monastery at Curbio.<sup>76</sup> Was Judith, with the encouragement of Heilwig, acting in conscious imitation of queen Balthild?

Whilst Louis and Judith sought to attach themselves to powerful patrons in heaven, Einhard was himself perceived as a power-broker in the palace. The empress had no monopoly of access to imperial favour; Judith was only one amongst a group of influential figures at court who could act as patrons. The election of a new archbishop of Sens in 829 provides a rare illustration of how suitors beyond the court sought favour there. Jeremiah of Sens died in early December 828. Frotharius of Toul wrote to lobby Einhard's support in the matter of a new archbishop, asking him to use his influence with the emperor so that in the subsequent election the wishes of the clergy of Sens be respected.<sup>77</sup> Similar letters were sent by Frotharius to the empress and another to Hilduin the archchaplain.<sup>78</sup> The outcome, in June 829, was the appointment of Aldric, abbot of Ferrières. We cannot know if he was the candidate Frotharius had in mind. These letters reveal that petitioning the empress alone was not always enough to secure patronage: it was necessary to activate as many contacts as possible at court. Judith was part of a court culture and there were other *palatini* besides her whom outsiders, like Frotharius and the clergy of Sens, considered influential.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless the empress was perceived as a particularly influential patron, only the queen had intimate personal access to the emperor.

The written evidence for such relations can only be fragmentary. Much important business can be conducted through personal contact, private transactions which are never intended to be recorded. The queen's lack of formal public powers meant that she might often have to pursue her interests by such informal means. In 829 a bright young man from Reichenau joined the royal household to serve as tutor to Charles the Bald. Walahfrid claimed that it was the empress herself who had summoned him to

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<sup>76</sup> *Vita Sanctae Balthildis*, A, ed. B Krusch, MGH SSRM 2, cap. 8, p. 492.

<sup>77</sup> MGH Epp. 5, Ep. 14. p. 286.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, Ep. 12., p. 285; Ep. 15. pp. 286-7.

<sup>79</sup> See Airlie, 'Bonds of Power'.



court and appointed him tutor to her son.<sup>80</sup> Charles the Bald was six in the summer of 829 and perhaps ready to begin a more formal education. Walahfrid was an Alemannian like Judith, a connection which may have been enough to recommend this talented scholar to her. His name was already known at Aachen.

The work which had probably brought Walahfrid to the attention of the court and the empress also tells us something about the tone of the palace environment in the 820s. Walahfrid's poem *Visio Wettini* was sent to Grimald at court circa 826. It contained a graphic scene where Charlemagne is depicted in hell undergoing torment in reparation for his sins on earth. The horrific nature of Charlemagne's punishment is made to fit his crimes: birds tear at his genitals as punishment for his sexual immorality and licence.<sup>81</sup> This puritanical and pointed moral critique of Charlemagne struck a sympathetic chord at Reichenau and, perhaps, with circles around Louis the Pious and the new model of Christian rulership he was attempting to promote. But what may have been less welcome, especially to the empress, was Walahfrid's attack on the emperor's practice of appointing widows as abbesses. Walahfrid argued that widows, not being virgins, were incapable of living the chaste life and claimed that some abbesses had brought clandestine lovers into their monasteries to satisfy their lust. Walahfrid described widows in unflattering terms as 'dead flesh' - and he urged Louis the Pious not to put the dead in charge of the living.<sup>82</sup>

An aristocratic widow with a very high profile, not long since appointed abbess at Chelles, was, of course, Judith's mother Heilwig. Walahfrid's words were unambiguous and deeply offensive. This may have been a naive and unfortunate error on Walahfrid's part - when he composed his work Heilwig may not yet have been appointed abbess.<sup>83</sup> Or was it a calculated criticism of Heilwig to prove his even-

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<sup>80</sup> *Ad Judith Imperatricem*, MGH Poetae 2, XXIIIa, pp. 378-9. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p.82-83.

<sup>81</sup> Walahfrid, *Visio Wettini*, vv. 446-60, pp. 55-6.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 743-68, pp. 66-67.

<sup>83</sup> Traill argues that Walahfrid wrote his poem shortly after Wetti's death on 4th November 824, *ibid.* p. 9. Yet we do not know when Heilwig entered Chelles or the month in 825 she became abbess. Walahfrid may have composed the poem in the



handedness and integrity? The young intellectual made his peace with Judith - his strong words did not prevent him securing a place close to the centre of power. It is Walahfrid who provides the other portrait of Judith at court in the 820s.

Walahfrid's poem *De imagine Tetrici*, inspired by the statue of Theoderic which Charlemagne had brought from Ravenna, was probably written in the spring of 829.<sup>84</sup> The vices of the tyrant and heretic are used by the poet to contrast the beneficence of Louis' rule. Judith appears in a procession headed by Louis, in the guise of Moses, who is followed by the sons of Irmengard to whom Walahfrid is careful to give their appointed places as his heirs.<sup>85</sup> Like Ermold before him, Walahfrid focuses on Judith by focusing first on Charles, the poet's pupil. Scintilla, Walahfrid's muse, sees beautiful Rachel leading Benjamin by the hand, the solace of his grandfather.<sup>86</sup> Modern interpretations of this passage have hinged on Walahfrid's portrayal of Charles as Benjamin, the favoured son of Jacob. The poem has thus been linked directly with political tensions in the twelve months before the revolt of spring 830. But the relation of panegyric poetry to political reality may not be so straightforward.<sup>87</sup>

It is worth looking in more detail at Walahfrid's depiction of Judith and his use of biblical and classical models. Rachel was a second wife who suffered the humiliation of childlessness for many years before her prayers were answered. Benjamin was a

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winter of 824/early 825. The first mention of the work is when he sent it to Grimald at Aachen in 826.

<sup>84</sup> Godman, 'Louis the Pious' discusses the poem, its dating and place in the poetry of the reign, pp. 274-86; also Godman, *Poets and Emperors*, pp. 133-45. See also F. Thurlemann, 'Die Bedeutung der Aachener Theoderich-Statue für Karl den Grossen (801): Materialien zu einer Semiotik visueller Objekte im frühen Mittelalter', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 59 (1977) pp. 25-65, pp. 26-30, 64-5.

<sup>85</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine Tetrici*, ed. E Dümmler, MGH Poetae 2, vv. 147ff., pp. 374-5. On the Moses theme see H. Siemes, *Beiträge zum literarischen Bild Kaiser Ludwigs des Frommen in der Karolingerzeit*, Fribourg, (1966) p. 138 ff.

<sup>86</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine*, vv. 177-91, pp. 375-6.

<sup>87</sup> As demonstrated by N. Staubach, *Das Herrscherbild Karl des Kahlen: Formen und Funktionen monarchischer Repräsentation im frühen Mittelalters* Münster, (1982) p 61 ff.

much-desired second son but his mother died in childbed after much suffering. So Rachel never led her Benjamin by the hand.<sup>88</sup> The biblical typology chosen by Walahfrid makes a special point of Judith's relationship with her child as well as stressing his familial position as a 'Benjamin'. Rachel's story is hinted at again when Walahfrid speaks of the mother's joy at her son's glorious future, although she has suffered. This may be a reference to Rachel's travail and eventual death mixed with her feelings of exultation at Benjamin's birth.<sup>89</sup> For a queen like Judith with only one son, Rachel was a not inappropriate model. Judith had waited four years for his birth and it is not hard to imagine the deep anxiety during that time of a young queen with no son.<sup>90</sup> The birth of Charles was her crowning glory. No wonder, then, that Walahfrid, like Ermold, stressed the bond between mother and son.

Walahfrid now turns from pupil to patroness. The empress is portrayed as a modern reincarnation of the biblical Judith ('You were not named Judith in vain'), whom she resembles through her piety and virtue. Judith's slaying of Holofernes is related.<sup>91</sup> The analogy with her biblical namesake was a natural one. Judith was a female model of justice and chastity; through the murder of Holofernes she had been the saviour of her people. She was also one of the few models available in the Old Testament of a woman playing an active, public and positively valued role. It is noteworthy that in his portrayal of the empress Walahfrid associates her consistently with active female models rather than the more usual passive models of correct feminine behaviour.<sup>92</sup>

The Moses theme, used by Walahfrid to portray Louis and his sons, is continued in a comparison of the empress with Moses's sister Miriam which also refers back to the biblical Judith's song of triumph at the defeat of Holofernes.

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<sup>88</sup> Gen. 30: 1-2, 22; 35: 16-19.

<sup>89</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine*, v. 183, p. 376.

<sup>90</sup> An example of anxiety caused by a queen's infertility: Charles the Bald in later life invoked the aid of the Virgin Mary in the early years of his marriage to Richildis, his second wife, when she was still sonless. See Hyam, 'Ermentrude' pp. 155-6.

<sup>91</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine*, vv. 192-6, p. 378.

<sup>92</sup> Godman, 'Louis the Pious', p. 285.

Maria struck the noisy drums of hide,  
Judith played sweet instruments with a plectrum<sup>93</sup>

Scholars have differed in their interpretation of these lines concerning the reality of Judith's historic musicianship and the identity of the instrument being played.<sup>94</sup> The literary context, combined with a lack of any corroborative evidence, precludes any judgement on the empress Judith's musical ability. It is by no means clear that he is indeed referring to the empress and not the biblical heroine at this point in the text! Walahfrid is surely making a poetic contrast between Miriam's raucous drumming and Judith's harmony whether empress or the fearless slayer of Holofernes. The implied identification of the empress with Miriam is interesting in itself. Miriam, like the biblical Judith, was a woman associated with leading her people to freedom. Perhaps Walahfrid knew of an interest on the part of the imperial couple in Moses and Miriam as inspirational biblical figures. A Roman sarcophagus decorated with friezes depicting scenes from the crossing of the Red sea where Miriam, beating a drum leads the Israelites to freedom was to be used for the burial of Louis the Pious at Metz over a decade later.<sup>95</sup>

Walahfrid also compared the empress with two erudite women, the Greek poetess Sappho and the biblical prophetess Holda.

'O, if eloquent Sappho or Holda could see us,

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<sup>93</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine*, vv. 197-8, p. 376; Exodus 15: 20; Judith 16: 1-2.

<sup>94</sup> *Pecten* = *plectrum* suggests that it is not an organ. F. von Bezold, 'Die Kaiserin Judith und ihr Dichter Walahfrid Strabo', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 130 (1924) pp. 377-439, pp. 399-418, reveals the interest of 50 years ago in this 'problem'. A. Dantl, 'Walahfrid Strabos Widmungsgedicht an die Kaiserin Judith und die Theoderichstatue vor den Kaiserpfalz zu Aachen', *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins* 52 (1930) 1-38, at p. 19 favoured an 'instrument', but see A. Onnerfors, 'Walahfrid Strabo als Dichter', *Medievalia: Abhandlungen und Aufsätze, Lateinische Sprache und Literatur des Mittelalters*, 6; Frankfurt, (1977) p. 172. Despite von Bezold and Dantl, Walahfrid was not Judith's poet

<sup>95</sup> See R Melzak, 'Antiquarianism in the time of Louis the Pious and its influence on the art of Metz', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 629-40, at 630-31.



Then you would vie with them in scanning metre or prophesy of the future.<sup>96</sup>

It is unlikely that Walahfrid knew Sappho's poems. The reference is rather to Sapphic metre. Sappho is used as an exemplar of feminine poetic skill and learning; to Venantius Fortunatus she was the 'learned girl'. The comparison would be pointless unless Judith wanted to see herself in this light, as a modern personification of Sappho, a learned woman. The compliment was also self-congratulatory on Walahfrid's part for if Judith were to compose any poetry of her own then he, as tutor to her son Charles, would bask in the reflected glow of her learning.<sup>97</sup> Holda was a prophetess who lived in the scholars' quarter of Jerusalem. She interpreted the book of the law for King Josiah and foretold God's punishment for the people's idolatry. She was not only a scholar and prophet but also a counsellor of kings.<sup>98</sup> Perhaps Walahfrid hints that Judith's role is to counsel the emperor in foretelling the future?

The poet's intention in using the models of Holda and Sappho is to make very specific reference to Judith's erudition and culture, which lift her above the limits of womanhood.

'What the weakness of your sex takes from you,  
A disciplined and cultured life returns with talents.'<sup>99</sup>

Walahfrid's portrait of Judith in *De Imagine Tetrici* is something new. Unlike Ermold he mentions her good looks only once, and then almost in passing.<sup>100</sup> Walahfrid concentrates, quite naturally, on Judith's relationship with Charles and his future, but

<sup>96</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine*, vv. 199-200, p. 376; H. Homeyer, 'Zu Walahfrid Strabos Gedicht über das Aachener Theoderich-Denkmal', *Studi medievali*, 3. 12 (1971) pp. 889-913, at pp. 909-10.

<sup>97</sup> For sapphic metre, Wandelbert, *Ad Otricum clericum*, MGH Poetae, 2; Venantius Fortunatus, *Ad Gregorium episcopum*, MGH AA, 4, vii. p. 212.

<sup>98</sup> 4 Kings 22: 14-20.

<sup>99</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine*, vv. 201-2, p. 376. This is a cliché used in praise of women who 'transcend' the limits of their sex. See Venantius Fortunatus on Radegund, n.97.

<sup>100</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine*, 'pulchra Rachel', v.177, p. 375.



he also emphasises her eloquence and learning. Queens are not usually compared with Sappho in the ninth century. Indeed, one has to go back to the sixth century to find a queen praised in similar terms, also by a scholar-poet, for her learning, namely Radegund. The young Radegund was educated by King Clothar to be his queen but she left his palace to found the convent of Ste.Croix at Poitiers. Radegund may have written poems of her own besides being the subject of poetry written for her by Venantius Fortunatus, thus prefiguring Walahfrid and Judith.<sup>101</sup> It was expected that a queen should have some educational polish; Fredegund was scoffed at for her low birth and lack of letters.<sup>102</sup> Theodulf complimented Charlemagne's women, his sister the nun Gisela, his daughters and future wife Liutgard on their eloquence and wittiness in a poem celebrating the splendours of the court. In the mid-ninth century there is the example of Irmengard, Lothar's wife, to whom Sedulius dedicated poetry and Hrabanus Maurus sent a commentary on the book of Esther.<sup>103</sup> This was probably the same commentary on Esther, the model biblical queen, that Hrabanus had written expressly for Judith in the early 830s.<sup>104</sup> But at the time Walahfrid was writing *De Imagine Tetrici* there was no recent precedent, or parallel, for a learned queen praised in such terms.

Judith's scholarly interests were taken up elsewhere in 829 by Freulf, bishop of Lisieux. The letter of dedication which accompanied the second volume of his world

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<sup>101</sup> On Radegund's education see Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita S. Radegundis*, MGH AA 4.2, i-ii. p. 38, and for poetry addressed to her MGH AA 4. v-xxi. pp. 193-200. See also R. Bezzola, *Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en Occident (500-1200)*, Paris, (1958) i. pp. 57-9, 65-75. Radegund's reputation for learning does not, however, present an exact parallel with Judith at Louis' court because of its monastic content.

<sup>102</sup> Stafford, *Queens*, pp. 55, 112.

<sup>103</sup> For the text and transl. of Theodulf's poem 'On the court', Peter Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, London, (1985) pp. 154-5; M. Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, Handbuch der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft in systematischer Darstellung, 19; Munich, (1911) i. pp. 315-16; Hrabanus Maurus, *Ad Irmingardam Augustam*, MGH Poetae, 2, ii. p. 167; see with M de Jong, 'The empire as *ecclesia*: Hrabanus Maurus and biblical *historia* for rulers', in *Uses of the Past*, eds., Hen and Innes, pp. 191-226.

<sup>104</sup> See above, chapter 7.

chronicle conveys a similar message to that of Walahfrid. Freulf is amazed at her 'wisdom' and erudition in divine as well as liberal studies. He entreats Judith to use history to teach Charles 'wisdom' and 'prudence' just as Bathsheba taught her son Solomon. Freulf goes on to express clear hopes of Charles' future kingship, calling him 'our joy and our king of a new age'.<sup>105</sup> The precise context of this Solomon parallel, a mother teaching wisdom to her son, does not necessarily imply a more pointed political meaning. It would be unwise to infer from Freulf's hyperbole that Charles was to exclude his elder brothers in the manner of Solomon and become his father's ultimate heir. Yet Freulf was not so very far off the mark, the young Charles was indeed to be offered a kingdom of his own.

In August 829, at the full assembly held at Worms, the six-year-old Charles was granted his own kingdom in the form of the duchy of Alemannia; a transaction omitted by the annalist. Once again it is Nithard, above all, for whom this act is significant: Lothar's reflex action was rebellion in order to deny his half-brother the inheritance that Charles' historian sees as rightfully his: 'It was if Lothar had at last found a pretext to rebel'. Alemannia lay in Lothar's share of the empire under the provisions of the *Ordinatio*. Thegan comments drily that Lothar and the young Louis, both present at Worms, were 'outraged' - as Lothar's two younger brothers had been with the settlement of 817.<sup>106</sup> The endowment of Charles with a share of the Frankish empire, whenever it took place, was going to be an inevitable cause of tension in the royal family. Alemannia might be seen as the least contentious province that Charles could be offered. It was an area of the empire where Charles already had contacts through his mother's kin. Louis was not granting his youngest son a share of Francia. Neither could Alemannia be seen as a share equal in size to the kingdoms designated for the sons of Irmengard. If the ambitions of Louis and Judith for their

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<sup>105</sup> Freulf, *Chronicorum tomi duo*, PL 106, cols. 919-1258, 1115-16; dedicatory letter, MGH Epp. 5, 14. pp. 319-20. On the dating of the chronicle and for Freulf's career see Chester F. Natunewicz, 'Freculphus of Lisieux, his Chronicle and a Mont St. Michel Manuscript', *Sacris Erudiri*, 17 (1966) pp. 99-134, esp. pp. 99-104, 109-111.

<sup>106</sup> Nithard, I, cap. 3, p. 10; Thegan, cap. 35, p. 220.

son's future stopped at Alamannia then they were modest enough, and the outcome of the Worms assembly a compromise that Lothar might have found acceptable.<sup>107</sup>

The palace annalist omits the creation of Charles' kingdom under the 829 annal but records other business of the Worms assembly also of direct concern to Judith, namely the appointment of a new chamberlain. Bernard, count of Barcelona, was the emperor's godson and a member of the royal kin in his own right. In 824 he had married Dhuoda in the palace chapel at Aachen.<sup>108</sup> Louis called him to Aachen from the Spanish March, where he had recently proved himself a successful commander, but in so far as recent politics in the royal household were concerned, he was a relative outsider.<sup>109</sup> The atmosphere in the palace may have been tense: we do not know the circumstances in which Tanculf, his predecessor, left office.<sup>110</sup> The integrity of Louis' counsellors and officers of government was another matter aired at Worms which suggests an awareness, in some quarters, that all was not as it should be in the royal household. The bishops present at Worms presented the emperor with requests for reform and prominent amongst them was a plea that Louis choose loyal and faithful men as counsellors and ministers.<sup>111</sup> The scandal surrounding the dismissal of Hugh and Matfred had also left its mark. The transfer of power at Orleans from Matfred to Bernard's cousin Odo<sup>112</sup>, the new count, and the destruction of Matfred's patronage network in the area was not achieved overnight. Early in 829 Louis instructed the *missi* to enquire into continued abuses by Matfred's affinity in the

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<sup>107</sup> Lothar's name was dropped from the diplomas and he returned to Italy, which looks like exile only in the light of what happened next. Cf. Boshof, *Erzbischof Agobard*, pp. 200 ff.

<sup>108</sup> On Bernard see J Wollasch, 'Eine adlige Familie des frühen Mittelalters, ihr Selbstverständnis und ihre Wirklichkeit', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 39, (1957), pp. 150-88.; Dhuoda, *Liber manualis*, praefatio, p. 84

<sup>109</sup> *ARF*, an 827, p. 172 and an 829, p. 177; Thegan, cap. 36, pp. 220-222; Astron, cap. 43, p. 454.; Nithard, I, cap. 3, p. 10.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Depreux, *Prosopographie*, p. 380

<sup>111</sup> MGH Capit. 2, 196, pp. 48-9; however, only the *relatio* from the Paris synod has survived; see the comments of Boretius, p. 27.

<sup>112</sup> Le Jan, 'Prosopographica', 281, pp. 265-66.



region.<sup>113</sup> The need for faithful *proceres* was one that the emperor was aware of: Worms was perhaps the occasion when Conrad and Rudolf became more closely associated with the royal household. We do not know how old these young men were in 829 and it is entirely possible that when Judith had married the emperor they were still boys. I suggest that they came to the palace to join the *scola* or palatine *milites* in order to continue their military and political education. The appointment of Bernard as chamberlain may have been in response to the bishops' concerns and amidst highly publicized expectations of good faith and loyal service.

Such a conclusion is ironic in the light of the unanimous vilification of Bernard and his disruptive influence in the palace in the sources. Only nine months after the Worms assembly, in the Spring of 830, Louis faced rebellion and Judith was accused of adultery with the new chamberlain. The palace annalist described Christmas at Aachen in 829 as one of unconfined joy, celebrated with '*magna laetitia*'.<sup>114</sup> The season of Christ's birth was an important Christian festival in the royal household but in this particular year there was much to celebrate. James Allen Cabaniss has read into the annalist's more than usually ebullient Christmas spirit a personal triumph for Judith, who according to Cabaniss, directed festivities in the palace, rejoicing at the fulfillment of her plans for Charles the Bald and the return of Lothar to Italy.<sup>115</sup> There is little evidence for Judith's Christmas entertainments, more plausible, though is Cabaniss's interpretation of the political mood at Aachen, the suggestion that hard tasks had been accomplished and decisions taken about the future of the empire by the close of 829, and that Louis and Judith had reason to feel secure for the moment and hopeful for their successful implementation. The emperor had responded to the bishops's request for good counsellors by appointing a new chamberlain and promised to consider church reforms: Lothar had accepted his father's authority and returned to

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<sup>113</sup> MGH, Capit. 2, 187, p. 10.

<sup>114</sup> *ARF*, an 829, p. 177.

<sup>115</sup> J A Cabaniss, 'The Christmas of 829', *Church History* 43 (1974), pp. 304-7, at p. 305 and see below, chapter 6 for a discussion of Agobard's comments on Judith's 'game-playing' in the palace.



Italy. Charles the Bald had been granted the duchy of Alemannia. Bernard's kinsman, Odo of Orleans, had been given full imperial support in his *comitatus* : the 'dishonoured' of 828 were not to be re-admitted to their *honores* or imperial favour. In other words it is possible to view the rebellion of April 830 as a reaction to a vigorous re-assertion of authority over the previous fourteen months. The problem for Judith was that the reaction was also directed against her.

## Chapter 4

### Adulterous queen: Judith and the rebellion of 830.

After the relative scarcity of evidence for Judith's career in the 820s she is suddenly and dramatically at the centre of events. In April 830 Pippin of Aquitaine headed a rebellion against Louis the Pious. The palace annal, probably written at the end of that year, stated Pippin's aims. These were, 'to depose the emperor, kill Bernard and ruin his stepmother'.<sup>1</sup> The chamberlain Bernard had spent just one winter with the royal household at Aachen but this was evidently long enough to make him the target of the rebels and to provide ammunition for charges of sexual misdemeanours.<sup>2</sup> The ruin of Judith, the ending of her exercise of queenship in the palace, was to be achieved by attacking her chastity. Pippin accused the empress, his stepmother, of adultery with the chamberlain - the official in the royal household whom Adalhard had envisaged working, on some occasions, under (*sub ipsa*) the queen's direction.<sup>3</sup> Thegan could hardly bring himself to repeat the allegations voiced by the rebels: 'what they said is something it is shameful to speak or to believe namely that queen Judith had been dishonoured (*violatam*) by a certain duke Bernhard, who was a member of the royal family as well as being the emperor's godson: it was all lies'.<sup>4</sup> A choice of words which distanced the empress from moral responsibility, inferring that she had been the victim of a sexual crime. Yet, by identifying Bernhard's familial and spiritual relationship to the emperor Thegan pointed his readers to the substance of the charges laid against Bernard and Judith. Where Thegan hinted at the monstrous crime Judith and Bernard were charged with, the Astronomer was explicit: the unnamed

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<sup>1</sup> *AB*, an 830, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Collins, 'Pippin I', p. 378.

<sup>3</sup> *DOP*, cap. 5, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> '*quod impium est fari vel credi dixerunt Iudith reginam violatam esse a quodam duce Bernhardo, qui erat de stirpe regali et domni imperatoris ex sacro baptismatis filius, mentientes omnia*'. cap. 36, p. 222. The verb *violare* need not, however, mean rape.

conspirators went to Pippin and pointed out his slighting at the hands of Bernard, 'assuring him - it is shameful to speak it - that Bernard had committed incest in the bed of his (Pippin's) father'.<sup>5</sup> The incest was spiritual but no less abhorrent and polluting for Bernard was the godson of Louis the Pious and thus his spiritual son. Incest was a sexual crime that carried a penalty of life-long penance to which Charlemagne had added the punishment of confiscation of property; here indeed was a means of ruining the empress.<sup>6</sup>

The most sensational claims about both Judith and Bernard are found in the writings of two Frankish churchmen, virulent critics of Louis the Pious and violently hostile to Judith: Agobard, archbishop of Lyons and Radbert, abbot of Corbie under Charles the Bald.<sup>7</sup> In the first of his *Libri Apologetici*, written for Lothar in the summer of 833, Agobard identified Judith as the '*auctrix malorum*': her serial adultery with unnamed lovers was a consequence of the emperor's sexual inadequacy as a husband.<sup>8</sup> For Radbert, writing a posthumous defence of abbot Wala for the community of Corbie in the mid-850s, Bernard, rather than Judith was his hate figure. In the *Epitaphium Arsenii*, Radbert fulminated against the chamberlain, 'that stallion', (*ille amisarius*), who had turned the palace into a brothel where adultery reigned. Radbert charged Bernard with conspiring to murder the emperor and make it look as if he had died of illness, meanwhile Judith controlled the mind and will of a deluded Louis the Pious.<sup>9</sup> And this was not all.

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<sup>5</sup> 'asserentes etiam eum - quod dictu nefas est - thori incestatorem paterni; patrem porro adeo quibusdam elusum praestigiis, ut haec non modo vindicare, sed nec advertere posset.' cap. 44, p. 456.

<sup>6</sup> Wemple, *Women*, p. 76; MGH Capit. I, pp. 38-9. The prohibition of incest is a consistent theme of Carolingian church councils, thus MGH Conc. I: Friuli 796/7, cap. 7, p. 192; Orleans, 813, p. cap. 11, p. 251; Chalons, 813, cap. 7, p. 295, cap. 25, p. 300; Paris, 829, cap. 69, p. 671.

<sup>7</sup> Ward, 'Agobard and Paschasius', pp. 15-26.

<sup>8</sup> *LA I*, cap. 2, p. 309.

<sup>9</sup> *Epitaphium II*, cap. 8, p. 69; cap. 9, pp. 71-73.

Radbert discerned the abundant signs of the Antichrist in the royal palace during Bernard's brief time as chamberlain: the flourishing of diabolical arts and impious beliefs, adultery and the rule of the adulterous queen.<sup>10</sup>

The problems in using the writings of both Agobard and Radbert for an account of Judith's career and the 830 coup have already been touched on.<sup>11</sup> Their lurid charges against Judith, and Bernard, have found their way into political narratives of the reign.<sup>12</sup> Yet this heady mix of sex, murder and sorcery tells us more of the literary representation of the court of Louis the Pious than the historical reality of politics in 830 and 833. It needs to be restated here that neither the *Libri Apologetici* nor the *Epitaphium* were conceived as historical accounts of the rebellions of 830 and 833: they are both works of rhetoric. The figure of Judith, represented by both Agobard and Radbert as an evil or adulterous queen, could be manipulated to serve the different purposes of their polemics.<sup>13</sup> Radbert, probably writing circa 856, was concerned to justify the controversial career of abbot Wala in heroic terms to the community of Corbie. Agobard wrote his attack on Louis the Pious during the rebellion of 833 and his task was to defend the indefensible: filial opposition to paternal rule and the deposition of a Christian king.<sup>14</sup> For these reasons I have, for the most part, not relied on Agobard and Radbert as factual guides to the rebellions of 830 and 833. Agobard's use of Judith in

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<sup>10</sup> Agobard, see below, chapter 6 *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> See above, Introduction.

<sup>12</sup> Halphen weaves passages from both Agobard and Radbert into his political narrative in, *L'empire*, pp. 268-89

<sup>13</sup> Ward, 'Agobard and Pachasius', pp. 16-24, Bührer-Thierry, 'La reine adultère', pp. 299-312.

<sup>14</sup> See below, chapter 6.



his argument for Lothar against the emperor in 833 and his discussion of the queen's role will be discussed in chapter 6.

Sexual defamation was a powerful political weapon to use against a queen but accusations of sexual crime, which occur with frequency throughout the medieval period, had no single meaning.<sup>15</sup> In the hands of a royal husband it could be the means to rid himself of a childless or otherwise unsatisfactory wife<sup>16</sup>; in the hands of a king's political enemies, including restless sons, it was a useful mechanism to legitimate opposition to royal government. It was also a method for removing the queen herself - this, after all, was one of Pippin's declared aims - and so breaking the threads of her patronage network. An accusation of sexual transgression laid against the queen and an unpopular royal official or prominent courtier killed two birds with one stone. Judith was not the first Frankish queen to be suspected of adultery with a prominent member of the royal court: Brunhild was accused of adultery with Protadius, a court official and Fredegund of a liaison with the mayor of the palace, Landeric.<sup>17</sup> An attack on Judith was also an attack on the chamberlain Bernard - the household official whom Adalhard had identified in his *DOP* as having a joint role with the queen in the management of the royal household: queen and chamberlain were together responsible for disbursements to palatine *milites* for example. This meant that queen and chamberlain, where they worked together, could present a formidable political partnership in the palace where their joint access to treasure gave them opportunities for patronage. There was, however, considerable scope for political instability where a new chamberlain did not get on with

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<sup>15</sup> Stafford, *Queens*, provides many examples pp. 94-8

<sup>16</sup> Bühler-Thierry, as note 12, provides a perceptive over-view of the three cases of queenly adultery in the ninth century, namely Judith, Theutberga and Richardis.

<sup>17</sup> Stafford, 'Queens', pp. 96-7; Brunhild and Protadius: Fredegar, *Chron*, 4, caps. 27-9, for factional politics in royal household, Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels', pp. 31-78; Fredegund and Landeric: Wemple, *Women*, pp. 64-5.

the queen as Hincmar alleged was the case with Richildis and Engelram in 875<sup>18</sup>. A different but related problem arose where a new chamberlain was unable to gain the confidence of the palace elite. A remedy was available. The removal of the chamberlain Bernard from his position of influence in the palace beside both emperor and empress could be achieved through an expedient charge of adultery with Judith.

This chapter addresses the political context in which an attack on Judith's chastity and queenship occurred, the vulnerability of Judith to sexual slander and examines the inherent danger in the emperor's presentation of a moral Christian rulership that focused on the royal couple, on husband and wife.

It was the muster of armies for an unpopular military campaign rather than any moral panic about the sexual mores of the empress and chamberlain which brought opposition to Louis the Pious into the open. The contemporary account of the rebellion, the 830 palace annal, located the flashpoint of the crisis as Bernard's urging of a campaign against the Bretons at the February assembly at Aachen. Complaints centred on the alleged difficulty of the journey but the perceived cost of the campaign may have outweighed any looked-for benefits to the participating Neustrian aristocracy.<sup>19</sup> The fact that it was Bernard's idea may have been enough - if there is a consistent theme in the sources which report the crisis of 830 it is the vilification of the chamberlain.<sup>20</sup> After the failure of the coup he was also a convenient scapegoat. If signs of political discontent were apparent in February at this Aachen assembly then the emperor did not heed them. Louis left Aachen on 2nd March and travelled north to the coast to pray at the shrine of

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<sup>18</sup> *AB*, an 875, p. 188; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 240-41.

<sup>19</sup> On the Neustrian background of the rebellion P Le Maître, 'L'oeuvre d'Aldric du Mans et sa signification (832-857)', *Francia*, 8, (1980), pp. 43-64.

<sup>20</sup> The antipathy to Bernard is summed up by the author of the Fulda annal for 830: 'Opposition to the emperor reared its head at Compiègne amongst the leading men of the Franks: the problem was Bernard whom they did not want in the palace', *The Annals of Fulda*, ed. and transl. T Reuter, Manchester, (1994), p.

St Omer before the planned rendezvous with the army at Rennes.<sup>21</sup> The annalist is explicit that Judith did not accompany Louis on his pilgrimage but remained at Aachen.<sup>22</sup> As did Bernard. With hindsight the emperor's departure from Aachen, leaving Judith and Bernard together in the palace was a fatal political error: Louis the Pious had himself created the conditions under which Judith was to be accused of adultery with Bernard.<sup>23</sup> In March, instead of joining the emperor at Rennes part of the army converged on Paris.<sup>24</sup> Their meeting place proved significant - predominant among the leaders who made common cause with Pippin were great magnates in the Paris region, including abbots Hilduin of St Denis, and Wala of Corbie, and Judith's twin supporters at the baptism of the Danish royal family, the disgraced counts Hugh and Matfred.<sup>25</sup>

It is the Astronomer who provides the most detailed account of Judith's experience during the rebellion but his narrative can be supplemented by Einhard's letters which allow an insight into the problems of loyalty faced by the Frankish aristocracy during the crisis. For all Einhard knew in April 830, the coup might have been successful and an act of conspicuous loyalty to Judith and Louis might prove disloyalty to Pippin and Lothar.

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<sup>21</sup> *AB*, an 830, p. 1; see also *AM*, an 830, pp. 95-96.

<sup>22</sup> '*domna imperatrice in Aquis dimissa*', *AB*, an 830, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> In the Arthurian legend it was during King Arthur's absence from the court that Lancelot and Queen Guinevere were accused.

<sup>24</sup> *AB*, an 830, p. 2; *AM*, an 830, p. 96.

<sup>25</sup> The rebels included: Wala of Corbie, arch-chaplain Hilduin, abbot of St Denis, bishop Jesse of Amiens, abbot Helisachar, Gotfred, counts Hugh and Matfred, count Warin of Macon and count Lambert of Nantes, Thegan, cap. 36, p. 222; Astron, caps. 44-5, pp. 456-63; R Hennebicque-Le Jan, 'Prosopographica neustrica: Les agents du roi en Neustrie de 639 a 840', in *La Neustrie*, I, ed., H Atsma, Paris, (1989), pp. 231-70, nos. 282, 179, 197.



Einhard's letters present the following scenario<sup>26</sup>: when the emperor had departed for the coast he had intended to meet Judith at Compiègne from where they would move towards Brittany. Louis the Pious had ordered Einhard to remain at Aachen with the empress until she set out on her journey to Compiègne; he then had leave to return home to Mulinheim and his saints. Events intervened: news reached Aachen of the rebellion. Bernard, who was clearly in great danger from the rebels, fled to Septimania;<sup>27</sup> Judith set out for Compiègne to rendezvous with Louis as planned but not before commanding Einhard to follow after her as soon as he was able to acquire horses.<sup>28</sup> Much to his considerable dismay instead of being able to return home to Mulinheim where, with any luck, he might have hoped to sit out the political emergency under the protection of saints Marcellinus and Petrus, Einhard found himself ordered to assist the empress, the main target of the rebels. After Judith had left Aachen, Einhard was either suddenly struck down by a combination of debilitating symptoms or he feigned a convenient illness. What is certain is that he did not meet up with Judith's household en route to Compiègne as she had directed him. Einhard wrote to the empress explaining why he had not obeyed her orders: he spared Judith none of the details. Violent aggravation of the guts, diarrhoea, had prevented him from riding a horse: in this weakened condition it had taken him ten days to travel from Maastricht to Valenciennes. Einhard assured Judith that he would hurry to attend her, and the emperor, when he had recovered: 'I most humbly beseech your piety that you will explain to my most merciful lord when you have the opportunity to come to him why I was not able to attend you both. As God is my witness I have written no falsehood to you concerning my infirmity'.<sup>29</sup> It is the insistence that he

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<sup>26</sup> *Epistolae*, ed., K Hampe, MGH Epp. 5 Berlin, (1899), where events unfold in Epp. 13-15, pp. 116-18.

<sup>27</sup> Astron, cap. 44, p. 456.

<sup>28</sup> 'Nunc iussit me regina, quando de Aquis egressa est, qui simul cum ea ire non poteram, post se ad Compiendum venire', Ep. 14, p. 117.

<sup>29</sup> Ep. 13, pp. 116-17.



is not lying which makes Einhard's illness suspicious. Judith may already have had grounds for doubting his trustworthiness, and appearances did not favour Einhard's story if he was telling the truth. Einhard certainly worked hard to prove his loyalty and good intentions, he fired off similar letters to Louis the Pious and to an unnamed friend asking him to intercede with the emperor at Compiègne.<sup>30</sup>

This series of letters, written in the middle of the political crisis allow a rare insight into the responses of the secular aristocracy to contemporary politics. Einhard's letter to Judith is particularly interesting. First, and incidentally, it provides evidence that the queen had her own household or entourage when she moved independently of the emperor. The empress was a source of authority and when she issued orders she expected to be obeyed. A refusal or inability to comply with the wishes of the empress would not be well-received by Louis the Pious: Einhard's letter to Judith is written by an anxious man, fearful of the consequences of ignoring her commands. We can only guess the reasons why Judith ordered Einhard to accompany her household on the flight from Aachen. Perhaps she needed a great Frankish magnate, a trusted adviser of the emperor and a political heavyweight with her, to replace Bernard. This may suggest that whenever Judith travelled independently of the emperor she was accompanied by a senior *palatinus*. Einhard fitted the bill very well. Judith had been his patron, she had donated her heavily-jewelled girdle to saints Marcellinus and Petrus. The awesome power of their relics had been catalogued in Einhard's account of their miracles. In calling on Einhard's loyalty in 830 Judith was also clothing herself in the protective power of his saints. On a more practical point, with Einhard in her entourage Judith may have felt less politically isolated and vulnerable as she travelled to meet the emperor at Compiègne. Einhard was a man who had outwitted abbot Hilduin and may have been well-suited to play a role of political mediator with her stepsons. In another of Einhard's letters written around this time he advised Lothar not to enter Francia without the express permission of his father

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<sup>30</sup> Ep. 14, p. 117.

the emperor.<sup>31</sup> Other great *palatini* such as Hilduin and Helisachar had joined the rebels. With Einhard in her entourage, Judith may have hoped to negotiate her way out of trouble on the road.

The Astronomer's account, unique in the sources, of what happened next suggests that he may have been a member of the party who travelled with Judith from Aachen. When the emperor had certain news of the conspiracy he directed Judith to take refuge at the convent of St Mary, Laon, where the emperor's daughter (and Pippin's sister) Hildegard may have been abbess.<sup>32</sup> But Laon did not prove a safe refuge once the Paris region as a whole fell under the control of Pippin. The small armed force who were travelling in Judith's entourage would have been no match for the army Pippin could call on in the area. (This gives another possible clue why Einhard - if he was feigning illness - was reluctant to risk attending the empress on the road to Compiègne.) When Pippin reached Verberie he sent counts Warin and Lambert 'and a great number of others' to take Judith hostage.<sup>33</sup> They moved swiftly on Laon where 'they caused queen Judith to be taken from the city and the basilica of the monastery', which implies that she was physically removed from the monastery church itself.<sup>34</sup> Warin and Lambert brought Judith to Pippin at Verberie where, freed from any lingering inhibitions concerning the sanctity of holy ground, the threat of violence was made explicit:

'Threatening death by many different tortures, they made her promise that, if she were given ample opportunity to speak to the emperor, she would persuade him to lay down his arms, cut his hair, and place himself in a monastery. Furthermore she would do the

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<sup>31</sup> Ep. 15, p. 118.

<sup>32</sup> Astron, cap. 44, pp. 457-8; we know that Hildegard was abbess in 841, when she held one of Charles the Bald's men hostage, Nithard III, cap. 4, pp. 96-8; Werner, 'Die Nachkommen', p. 447.

<sup>33</sup> '*aliisque quamplurimis*', Astron, cap. 44, p. 458.

<sup>34</sup> '*ex civitate monasteriique basilica eductam*', *ibid.*

same, placing the veil upon her head. The more eagerly they desired this outcome the more easily they believed it would happen.' <sup>35</sup>

Judith was indeed taken to Compiègne, where Louis the Pious was now a prisoner. Here, according to the Astronomer, emperor and empress had an opportunity to speak privately but the outcome of their conference was not what Pippin wanted. The emperor gave Judith permission to take the veil 'in order to escape death'. Louis the Pious refused to put down his arms and accept tonsure. These decisions were not well-received by the assembled army of Pippin and his followers.

'When the queen returned they restrained themselves from other evil deeds, but yielding to the loud demands (*adclamatio*) of the people (*vulgus*), they ordered her to be carried away into exile and thrust into the monastery of Saint Radegund.' <sup>36</sup>

The imposition of the veil on Judith by Pippin and his supporters at Compiègne and her incarceration at Poitiers is widely reported in the sources.<sup>37</sup> Those sympathetic to Louis the Pious interpreted Pippin's actions in terms of the illegal separation of husband and wife. Thegan emphasised coercion: Judith was 'veiled by force'. Agobard and Radbert emphasised the justice of a penalty imposed on an adulterous woman. All this evidence points towards the fact that Judith appeared before Pippin's followers to face a formal charge of adultery, what the Astronomer describes as the *adclamatio* of the crowd. The

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<sup>35</sup> *'quam usque adeo intentata post diversi generis penas morte adegerunt, ut promitteret se, si copia daretur cum imperatore loquendi, persuasuram, quatinus imperator abiectis armis comisque recisis monasterio sese conferret, se etiam imposito velo capiti itidem facturam. Quem rem quanto plus cupiebant, tanto facilius crediderunt', ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *'Redeunte ergo ad se regina, aliis quidem malis temperarunt, adclamationi autem consentientes vulgi, exilio eam deportari et in monasterio sanctae Radegundis iusserunt retrudi', cap. 44, p. 458.* The Astronomer's use of language is revealing: *adclamare* had a legal meaning, to bring a charge or complaint.



use here of the word *vulgus* to describe Pippin's army was surely meant to be derogatory, revealing the Astronomer's attitude to the actions of Pippin and his men. Judith's brothers, Conrad and Rudolf, were also tonsured at Compiègne and detained in Aquitanian monasteries, perhaps they had been in Judith's entourage when she left Aachen, which is more evidence that it was Pippin who was in the driving seat at this moment.<sup>38</sup> Enforced conversion to the monastic life was a useful weapon to control and neutralise political opponents even if in the short term.<sup>39</sup> The Astronomer's evidence is dramatic and detailed. One aspect of the biography that has gone unnoticed is the extent to which the Astronomer's narrative of the rebellion is so Judith-centred. The Astronomer stresses the hostility and violence offered to Judith, the danger she faced when the emperor refused to accept Pippin's terms, all of which may have been real. Judith may have been deeply unpopular with Pippin's army, described in insulting terms as a mob, but at the same time the Astronomer's account of her experience has the effect of heroising her. It is, of course, impossible to evaluate how reliable the Astronomer is concerning the events at Laon and Compiègne but he certainly highlights an area of ambiguity about the emperor's actions in allowing Judith to take the veil. The Astronomer is trying to accommodate the fact that the emperor participated, albeit under duress, in this judicial procedure. In the *Epitaphium*, Radbert maintained that it was the emperor himself who pronounced judgement on Judith: in his scenario Louis the Pious accepts Judith's guilt and sentenced his wife to a life of penance.<sup>40</sup> Radbert's evidence is clearly tendentious but it underpins the Astronomer's claim that it was the

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<sup>37</sup> *AB*, an 830, p. 2; '*vi velantes*', Thegan, cap. 36, p. 222 ; Nithard, I cap. 3, p. 10; *AM*, an 830, '*contra legem et omnem auctoritatem*', p. 97; Agobard, *LA I*, cap. 2, p. 309.

<sup>38</sup> '*fratres ejus Cunradum et Rodulfum totonderunt atque in Aquitaniam servandos Pippino commiserunt*', Nithard, as previous note.

<sup>39</sup> de Jong, *In Samuel's image*, pp. 254-7.

<sup>40</sup> '*Femine quoque huic, quam adiudicastis, quia mea est in illa ultio, iuxta communes leges, sicut deposcitis, vitam concedo, ita tamen ut sub sacro velamine deinceps degeat, et poenitentiam gerat*', *Epitaphium II*, cap. 10, p. 73.



emperor who gave Judith permission to take the veil. Louis the Pious called Pippin's bluff at Compiègne: luckily for Judith his judgement that Pippin's threats were meant only to frighten proved sound.

Lothar arrived at Compiègne in May and 'confirmed' Pippin's actions.<sup>41</sup> Further judicial penalties were handed down before an assembly but against the wishes of the emperor. Louis the Pious may have agreed to allow Judith to take the veil in order to save her life but he refused to participate in, and so legitimate, judgements against his own *optimates* at the Compiègne assembly. These men were Bernard's kinsmen. Heribert, his brother, was blinded which was the punishment for disloyalty. Odo, his cousin and the emperor's appointee in the county of Tours after the fall of count Hugh, 'was disarmed', that is deprived of his sword-belt, and sent into exile. The Astronomer explains the reason for their treatment was 'as if they were accomplices and promoters of what was shouted against Bernard and the queen'.<sup>42</sup> In other words, they too were identified by Pippin and Lothar as part of a political network around Bernard and Judith. The blinding of Heribert was probably borne out of frustration at Bernard's escape. Perhaps, it was intended to demonstrate to the emperor the depth of feeling against his regime and the new order in the palace. Significantly, there was no judgement on Louis the Pious, he was neither tonsured nor imprisoned in a monastery but held with Charles the Bald under conditions that Nithard describes as '*libera custodia*'.<sup>43</sup>

Judith's period of confinement at Radegund's convent is described thus:

'She was forced to go to the city of Poitiers and there she was held in the monastery of the Holy Cross. There both by day and night she devoted herself strenuously to serving

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<sup>41</sup> '*probavit autem que gesta erant*', Astron, cap. 45, p. 460; Nithard, I, cap. 3, p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> '*Denique Heribertus Berhardi frater luminum amissione multatus est contra votum imperatoris, Hodo consobrinus illius armis ablatis exilio deportatus, tamquam eorum, que Berhardo et regine adclamabantur, conscii et fautores.*' Astron, cap. 45, p. 460.

<sup>43</sup> Nithard, I, cap. 3, p. 10.

the Lord Jesus Christ and she strove to deserve the Lord's grace. She managed to please those who served the Lord there so much that they all said they wanted to be like her and profit from her example.' <sup>44</sup>

This account of Judith's six-month period of imprisonment was probably written at Chelles sometime between Judith's restoration as queen in 831 and the more serious rebellion headed by Lothar in the summer of 833.<sup>45</sup> Considering the author's emphasis elsewhere in the annal on the hostility of Pippin and his supporters towards Judith it is surprising to find that her time at Radegund's convent is presented as a period of prayer and spiritual reflection which won her the admiration of the community.<sup>46</sup> There is no suggestion here of a penitential regime imposed on a queen guilty of adultery. An abbey such as Ste Croix provided opportunities for learning, study and reflection; indeed earlier in the annal the author stressed Judith's learning and superior education.<sup>47</sup>

However Pippin had surely chosen the house to incarcerate his stepmother because it was a stronghold of his rule. Radegund's relic of the true cross, from which the abbey took its name, conferred tremendous prestige and power on the house. It was a centre of devotion for the most solemn feast of the Christian year, Easter, which Judith spent with the community. The sole surviving capitulary for Pippin's reign is in favour of the abbey to protect and ensure its freedoms from lay influence.<sup>48</sup> Indeed it was at Ste. Croix that

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<sup>44</sup> *Quae in Pictavensem urbem compulsa est ire, ibique domino Iesu Christo studioissime famulari die noctuque studuit, Domini quoque denuo gratiam inibi promereri meruit, atque inibi Domino famulantibus ita placere valuit, ut omnes ei imitabiles se esse velle profiterentur.* AM, an 830, p. 97

<sup>45</sup> See above, Introduction.

<sup>46</sup> Judith is the object of *odium*, AM, an 830, p. 95 and Charles of envy by '*emuli*', p. 96.

<sup>47</sup> '*sapientiae floribus optime instructam*' AM, an 830, p. 95.

<sup>48</sup> *Capitulaire de monasterio Sanctae Crucis*, MGH Capit. I, no 149, p.302. This capitulary is discussed by Y Labande-Mailfert, in *Histoire de l'abbaye de sainte-Croix de Poitiers*, Memoires de la Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest, 4th ser., vol 19 (1986-7), pp. 80-85; Collins, 'Pippin I', p. 369.

Pippin died on 13th December 838 and was buried.<sup>49</sup> In the spring of 830 Judith was, in effect, under house arrest at Poitiers and it is likely that an armed guard was billeted on the convent to ensure that she remained there. The woman charged with the politically sensitive task of caring for her royal prisoner was Abbess Gerberga.<sup>50</sup> It has been suggested that the abbess is that same Gerberga, sister of Bernard of Septimania, who was to be drowned in the Saone as a witch in 834.<sup>51</sup> But considering the vehemence of the attack on Bernard and other members of his family in 830 it seems unlikely that Bernard's sister would have been able to hold this key position in Pippin's kingdom.

Judith was at Poitiers, Louis the Pious and Charles the Bald remained together, but what of Gisela? A couple of years older than her brother, Gisela may have accompanied Judith to Poitiers where they spent the next six months together. If Gisela was at Ste. Croix then this may have been a formative experience for the eight-year-old, who was at an age when she might begin a more formal education. A royal convent was a suitable place. (Over thirty years later the joint will of Gisela and her husband Eberhard bears witness to her intellectual interests in the number and variety of books the couple bequeathed to their sons and daughters.)<sup>52</sup> Later in life she may have called on the memory of Radegund's convent to inspire her rule of the abbey of Cysoing.

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<sup>49</sup> *Chronique de Saint-Maixent*, ed. J Verdon, Paris, (1979), p. 54; Collins, 'Pippin I', pp. 369, 374; Labande-Mailfert makes the point that Pippin's entombment in the sanctuary of the convent where he was surrounded by the nuns was an exceptional privilege, *Histoire*, p. 85; J L Nelson, 'Carolingian royal funerals', in *Rituals of Power*, eds. F Theuws and J L Nelson, Leiden, (2000), pp. 133-84, at pp. 153-55 sees the burial as evidence of Pippin's good relations with the community.

<sup>50</sup> See the list of abbesses in, *Gallia Christiana* II, col. 1301; for Pippin's charter of 1st April 825 in favour of Gerberga, Sickel, L. 3, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Collins discusses this notion and notes that the Gerberga in 834 is identified merely as a *sanctimonialis* by the palace annalist. 'Pippin I', p. 375; *AB*, an 834, p. 14; Nithard, I, cap. 5, p. 23.

<sup>52</sup> de Coussemaker, 1, pp.1-5; for the will itself see P Riché, 'Les bibliothèques de trois aristocrates laïcs carolingiens', *Le Moyen Âge*, 69, (1963), pp. 87-104, at 96-101.



There was a fundamental weakness in the position of Pippin and Lothar at Compiègne in April 830. Just how permanent were these arrangements meant to be? For the rebellion to have had any chance of success or ultimate legitimacy then Pippin, Lothar and their supporters needed the emperor to lay down his sword-belt, as Odo had done, and to renounce voluntarily the responsibilities of imperial office and the secular aristocratic life. When he removed Judith from the basilica at St Mary, Laon Pippin, had calculated that Louis' regard for his wife was the lever that would force the emperor's hand. If the Astronomer is reliable on this point then Pippin was gravely mistaken: Louis the Pious had no intention of resigning his imperial office not even to save Judith's life. The rebels had no other mechanism, short of murder, to effect the removal of Louis the Pious from imperial office. The coup foundered on the intransigence of the emperor and the evident lack of aristocratic support around Pippin and Lothar for moves to wrest office permanently from Louis the Pious.

The counter-coup which restored Louis the Pious to power and returned Judith to the imperial palace was the result of a realignment of aristocratic loyalties in the summer of 830. A key figure in his father's political recovery of power was Louis the German who seems to have played no part in the rebellion. (It is possible that queen Emma had a role in negotiations: her sister and brothers had been key political targets of the rebels.) Summoning the autumn assembly was an imperial prerogative and the conditions of *libera custodia* allowed the emperor to move the venue for the projected assembly east of the Rhine to Nijmegen, enabling the attendance of Saxons, Alemannians and east Franks. The Astronomer's comment that the emperor actively 'distrusted the Franks', may indicate Louis' anxiety about the loyalty of *proceres* west of the Rhine in the aftermath of the Neustria-based rebellion.<sup>53</sup> A Nijmegen assembly allowed the emperor to capitalise on the support of Louis the German and, possibly, the Saxon and Bavarian connections

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<sup>53</sup> 'ubi saxones et orientali Franci convenire potuissent', *AB*, an 830, p. 2; 'diffidens quidem Francis, magisque se credens Germanis', *Astron*, cap. 45, p. 460.



of Queen Emma and therefore of Judith too. Louis the Pious certainly made the most of his political opportunity at Nijmegen. He reasserted his authority by addressing the assembled *procures*, and then followed up his surprise tactics with some hard negotiation.<sup>54</sup> Pippin and Lothar had to accept defeat and distance themselves from their associates. Louis had regained power and one of the emperor's first actions was to recall Judith from her six months enforced stay at Poitiers.

What was Pippin's problem in 830? Why was an attack on his stepmother part of the solution? Paternal neglect, may be the answer to the first question. A lack of involvement at his father's court where the Aquitanian nobility looked for patronage and the dawning realisation that he was being sidelined politically, may have contributed to Pippin's alienation. The king of Aquitaine is conspicuous by his absence in Walahfrid's *De imagine Tetrici*, where the young Charles and his mother are given prominence and ~~honoured~~ Louis the German and Lothar are honoured. But, conversely, one could also argue that Pippin was the victim of unwelcome paternal interference in the affairs of his court and kingdom. Pippin stood in the unenviable position of ruling a kingdom that had once been his father's. The banishment of Ermold from Pippin's entourage by the emperor offers an example.<sup>55</sup> The costs of the Breton campaign may also have weighed heavily on Pippin: did he have to provide the bulk of the army with little prospect of high quality plunder and spoils? Yet traditionally the single most important issue for historians when they have assessed the causes of the rebellion is Judith's promotion of Charles the Bald.

It is hard to understand why the grant of Alemannia to Judith's son should be a contingent factor in a rebellion headed by the king of Aquitaine.<sup>56</sup> Two sources for the

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<sup>54</sup> Nithard, I, cap. 3, pp. 12-13.

<sup>55</sup> MGH Poetae 2, vv. 177-88, pp. 375-6; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 86, 88; Collins 'Pippin I', p.377-83.

<sup>56</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 89.

coup of 830 place it in the context of family rivalry and the advancement of Charles but both have particular reasons for doing so. Nithard, looking back at his master's youth and the events of the reign of Louis the Pious, connected the grant of Alemannia with a motive for rebellion *by Lothar* in 830, 'it was as if he had at last found a reason to rebel'.<sup>57</sup> This is hardly surprising because the central argument of Nithard's *History* is that Lothar had an implacable opposition to his youngest brother. But it is the account which focuses on Judith's experience during the failed coup of 830 which was written at Chelles, and composed, we can assume, under the approving gaze of abbess Heilwig, which explained Pippin's rebellion in terms of fraternal strife. The first point to make about the view from Chelles, the so-called Metz annal for 830, is the fact that it constitutes a paen of praise to Judith and her lovely little son<sup>58</sup>; thus opponents of the beautiful and well-educated empress and Charles were motivated by sheer nastiness and envy. There is no acknowledgement of the charges of sexual impropriety against Judith and thus the real reason for her confinement at Poitiers. The Chelles annal does not mention Bernard. The view from Heilwig's convent was that Pippin had rebelled against his father out of 'hatred' for his half-brother and step-mother, fearing least Charles might 'succeed in the kingdom as his father's heir'.<sup>59</sup> There may be a psychological truth here, perhaps the position of Charles and Judith at their father's side in the palace at Aachen was resented by the sons of the empress Irmengard. But in the Spring of 830 was Charles already lined up to be his father's ultimate heir? First, the interpretation of the word *regnum* in this context: it could refer either to the empire as a whole or to the smaller kingdom of Francia itself. But more significantly it wasn't until 831, *after* the failure of Pippin's coup, that a new and revised division of the empire envisaged Charles being given a share of the Frankish heartlands.<sup>60</sup> And indeed it was only a year later in the Autumn of 832 that the nine-year-

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<sup>57</sup> '*quasi iusta querimonia reperta*', Nithard I, cap. 3, p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Charles the Bald is described in the annal as *elegans*, *AM*, an 830, p. 96.

<sup>59</sup> '*... ne in regno patris heres succederat*', p. 96.

<sup>60</sup> *Divisio regnorum*, MGH Capit. II, no. 194, pp. 20-24.

old Charles the Bald did indeed replace Pippin, if temporarily, as king of Aquitaine.<sup>61</sup> It is surely in this context, looking back retrospectively from 831 or 832, that the Chelles annal was composed. Seen from abbess Heilwig's perspective, and the writing of an entirely blameless account of Judith's experience in 830, the interpretation of these distressing events in terms of fraternal strife was by far the least damaging explanation of what had happened in 830.

A result of identifying resentment of Charles the Bald and Judith as the cause of the rebellion has had the impact of deflecting attention from other political tensions in the late 820s. There was, of course, the underlying conflict between Louis the Pious and Lothar, co-emperor with his father, but confined to Italy. The preconditions for rebellion also existed outside the Carolingian royal family. Political change in the royal household and the dismissal of counts in 828-9 had created a volatile political mix of 'in group' and 'out group' amongst the Frankish aristocracy. Hugh and Matfred, erstwhile supporters of the empress and two of the leading players in 830, had been deprived of their *honores* by the emperor in 828. Count Hugh was also Lothar's father-in-law. The 'dishonoured' had every reason to resent the new arrivals at court, namely the chamberlain Bernard and his kinsmen Odo and Heribert. There were also Judith's brothers, Conrad and Rudolf, who may have recently arrived at court to join the *scola*. These two families, the kin of Bernard and Judith, were targeted by the rebels. A new and unpopular chamberlain in the palace and, perhaps, the arrival of her brothers after 828 placed Judith in an even more dangerous situation. This would not have endeared her to those alienated from the political centre. Add to this the underlying family conflicts between Judith and the sons of Irmengard. The charge of adultery against Judith with the chamberlain had the effect of uniting the different elements who were already in opposition to Louis the Pious. Political conflict outside the royal family could be represented as conflict within it, crystallised in the alleged sexual misconduct of the queen.

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<sup>61</sup> See below, chapter 5.



So much for the political background to the coup. Equally relevant is the ideological context in which a charge of adultery could become a political weapon and how Judith's structural position both within the royal family and palace as stepmother and as queen caused her to fall victim to sexual defamation. A key distinction between the coup of 830 and the more serious rebellion of 833, which attempted formally to depose the emperor from office, is that neither Pippin nor his co-rebels produced or commissioned any intellectual defence for their actions. Yet Pippin was capable of understanding and interpreting new intellectual currents. Pippin, like his father, was the recipient of learned texts. His court had been a congenial environment for a poet and intellectual like Ermold who had written a poem of praise in honour of the young Aquitanian king. In 829 bishop Jonas of Orleans had dedicated a political treatise *De institutione regia* to Pippin.<sup>62</sup> Matfred, a key supporter of Pippin in 830, was also a layman who had an interest in the contemporary discourse about the moral life of the secular aristocracy, in the early 820s he had asked bishop Jonas for a guide that would assist those Christians 'tied by the bonds of marriage' to live the godly life.<sup>63</sup> In *De institutione laicali*, Jonas reflected on the obligations of marriage for the male aristocracy, stressing the avoidance of the sins of fornication and adultery. The godly life was also evidenced by a husband's management of his family, the control of wife and children and here Jonas was drawing on Augustine's notion of the *pax domestica*. After Matfred's fall in 828 Jonas revised his work which may indicate that he intended it for wider dissemination amongst the secular elite.<sup>64</sup> In

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<sup>62</sup> J Revirion, *Jonas d' Orleans et son 'De institutione regia'*, Paris, (1930), pp. 122-130.

<sup>63</sup> *De institutione laicali*, PL, 106, cols 121-278, for the dedication, *Praefatio*, cols. 122-23.

<sup>64</sup> Marriage is discussed in the second part of *De institutione*, II, cols. 22-23, 213-18. I draw on the perceptive discussion of this text by S R Airie, 'The Anxiety of Sanctity: St Gerald of Aurillac and his Maker', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43, (1992), pp.372-95, 377-79. A recent article by J M H Smith has drawn out the social implications of this text, particularly Augustine's notion of the *pax domestica*, for the Frankish aristocracy, 'Gender and ideology in the early middle ages', *SCH*, 34, (1998), pp. 51-73, especially at pp 64-68.



830 marriage and adultery had also been recent concerns of the Frankish church. Amongst other topics the council of Paris in 829 had decreed that husbands could not repudiate their wives for adultery, nor was either party, innocent or guilty, permitted to contract a new alliance in the eyes of the church. In cases of adultery the Frankish bishops imposed penance and, ideally, the reconciliation of the couple.<sup>65</sup> This was all part of the attempt of the Frankish church to advance a definition of marriage in the ninth century not only as a monogamous union but also an indissoluble one. But Judith was charged with incestuous adultery, Bernard was the emperor's godson, and incest was a far more serious matter. This was a sexual crime of particular horror to the Franks in the ninth century which destroyed the conjugal bond. The legislation at the council of Châlons in 813 permitted the permanent separation of husband and wife if one party was guilty of incest: remarriage was not possible. Suzanne Wemple has suggested that Pippin and the rebels were mindful of the implications of the spiritual relationship between Louis and Bernard and used the charge of incest to effect a permanent exclusion of Judith from the imperial marriage bed.<sup>66</sup> Conversely, the charge of incest may indicate the extent to which Bernard's enemies wanted to break his lines of patronage and exclude him from the royal household.

So, Pippin and Matfred were the kind of elite laymen who understood the political potential of sex crimes, allegations of adultery and incest in the palace, and their use as ideological hand-grenades to throw at Louis the Pious. But the contemporary discourse and legislation concerning incest, adultery and the indissolubility of marriage would have remained of purely intellectual interest if contingent political circumstances had not allowed them to come to the fore. Pippin accused Judith and Bernard of incestuous adultery because, fortuitously, that particular strategy was open to him. It was Judith's position as a second wife that allowed Christian sexual ethics to be the focus of attack for

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<sup>65</sup> MGH Capit. II, 196, pp. 45-6.

<sup>66</sup> For prohibitions against incest see above, note 6; Wemple, *Women*, p. 81.

the rebels. She was a safe target for the rebels because Pippin was not Judith's son. There was no threat to Pippin or Lothar's own legitimacy as Louis' sons in accusing their stepmother of immorality. But they would not have felt able to accuse their own mother of adultery as a device to be rid of an enemy. The Chelles account of what happened in 830 spells out the fact that Pippin was the son of an '*alia uxor*': he would not have attacked his own mother.<sup>67</sup>

It was the nature of life at the court itself which made the charges against a queen plausible. Charlemagne's court, as imagined in the poetry of Angilbert, and the poem *Karolus Magnus et Leo Papa*, is where royal women are described in an almost eroticised setting, surrounded by troupes of young men.<sup>68</sup> Louis the Pious may have turned his sisters out of Aachen and promoted a model of the court as a moral environment but the palace remained a magnet for young aristocratic males and females. In Ermold's poem in praise of Louis the Pious, Judith is described riding out on the hunt from Ingelheim in the midst of a similar band. We have to allow for poetic licence here, particularly Ermold's debt to Aeneid IV, but the presence of these young warriors at court is well documented. These were the palatine *milites* who, according to Adalhard, received their *dona annua* from the queen herself, the aristocratic lads in the *scola* who had come to court to complete their military and social education. Temptation, and so the plausibility of a charge of adultery, was all around Judith. As if to distance the saint from any breath of criticism queen Balthild's late seventh-century biographer desexualised her relationship with the young men in the palace when he described it as that of a mother.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *AM*, an 830, p. 95.

<sup>68</sup> *Karolus Magnus et Leo Papa*, where the author describes Charlemagne's women riding out in a throng of young men from Aachen, MGH Poetae. 1, ed. E. Dümmler, vv.177ff., p. 270ff.

<sup>69</sup> This is in 'A', see Fouracre and Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France*, pp. 114-5, 121

The development of the queen's role in the palace, as prescribed by Adalhard in *DOP*, and encouraged by Louis the Pious, may have increased her formal powers, status and symbolic function but it also had unforeseen consequences. The queen became more vulnerable to allegations of impropriety. Judith's relationships with the male personnel of the palace, such as chaplains, priests, and others who, like the queen, itinerated with the royal household. But above all, as we have seen, she had an *ex officio* relationship with the chamberlain.<sup>70</sup> Bernard of Septimania however had an extra dimension to his role as chamberlain. Nithard, no admirer of Bernard, mentions that Bernard was not only appointed chamberlain, thus becoming "second in the kingdom", in August 829 but was also commended with the care of the six year old Charles 'the Bald', a responsibility which placed Bernard in a special relationship with both of the child's parents, in particular his mother.<sup>71</sup> In practice, then Judith's relationship with Bernard would surely have involved both formal and informal meetings and for practical reasons they had to get on. There was therefore credibility to the innuendo that an illicit sexual relationship existed between empress and chamberlain. The overwhelming problem for Judith in the crisis of 830 was the vehemence of political opposition to the new chamberlain. Yet Bernard's brief career as chamberlain may not have been long enough to have antagonised and provoked the bitter hostility against him, and indeed his family, of all those who banded together with Pippin in 830.<sup>72</sup> By far the most virulent opposition to Bernard was to be expressed twenty-five years later in Radbert's *Epitaphium*, where apart from the sensational accusations of the chamberlain's sorcery, conspiracy to murder and disruptive sexual behaviour, the substance of the charge against Bernard seems to be that he had replaced Wala as an influence on Louis the Pious.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>71</sup> Nithard, I, cap 3, p 10.

<sup>72</sup> Thus Collins, 'Pippin I', p. 378.

<sup>73</sup> The opposition of values and personalities between Bernard and Wala is one of the most striking features of the *Epitaphium*: the departure of Wala for Corbie in 829 is



To expose Judith's vulnerability within the structures of the Carolingian family as a second wife and stepmother, and as queen in the royal household where her relationships with the *scolares* and palace officials could be misinterpreted, is not to cast her as a passive victim in the events of 830. Walahfrid had reminded her in 829 how her biblical namesake had overcome Holofernes; the empress would also conquer her enemies. Einhard's letters in 830 portray a decisive woman, sure of her authority in the midst of a crisis. Judith was capable of making her own political opponents. The empress had profited, albeit indirectly, from the exclusion of Hugh and Matfred as power-brokers in the palace after 828. Judith had replaced Matfred as a patron for count Ercingar.<sup>74</sup> Ermold's poetic description of the baptism of the Danes at Ingelheim in 826 made Matfred and Hugh, the 'twin counts', Judith's particular supporters.<sup>75</sup> The evidence is certainly slim but if she had picked up some of the threads of their patronage networks then the dishonoured counts may have readily identified themselves as Judith's enemies.

Judith Bennett has argued for a history of women which emphasises the continuity of the experience of oppression rather than privileging change and the amelioration of female status.<sup>76</sup> It is certainly true that allegations of sexual impropriety against queens recur throughout the medieval period and indeed the longer history of monarchy and royal courts;<sup>77</sup> a phenomenon which reveals the fragility of a queen's status and its ultimate

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offset by the arrival of Bernard at court, II, cap. 9, p. 72 with Ward, 'Agobard and Paschasius', p. 23

<sup>74</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>75</sup> See above, chapter 3..

<sup>76</sup> Judith Bennett, "'History that stands still': Women's work in the European past', *Feminist Studies*, 14,2 (1988), pp. 269-83.

<sup>77</sup> Lynn Hunt examines the charges of sexual deviance brought against Marie Antoinette, *The family romance of the French revolution*, California, (1992), pp. 89-123, especially pp. 102ff.



dependence on the marital relationship. Monarchy itself, male power and sovereignty, was maintained by the control of female chastity. Yet, medieval queenship was not static but dynamic. Frankish queenship developed in the ninth century as Louis the Pious advanced a model of the royal palace as a moral centre. At an obvious level Judith acted as queen within a different environment from those of the earlier Frankish queens Brunhild and Fredegund. Timothy Reuter commented on the relative absence of 'the chronicled savagery' of Merovingian politics from the narratives of the ninth century but concluded that this was an optical illusion.<sup>78</sup> The assassin's dagger and the poisoned cup are replaced in the ninth century by the legal, public violence of the state and the enforcement of Christian morality. In 818 the emperor's nephew Bernard had been punished for rebellion not by a knife between the ribs but by the judicial murder of law. Louis the Pious had begun his rule at Aachen in 814 by using Christian morality, charges of sexual impropriety, to expel his influential sisters from the palace. In 830 the emperor found that moral judgements could cut both ways. In advancing a view of his court as a moral centre where the queen had an enhanced status Louis also provided his critics with new ammunition for an attack on his rule. When Pippin charged his stepmother with adultery in 830 he was taking the lead from his father.

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<sup>78</sup> 'Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian empire', *TRHS*, 35, (1985), pp75-94, at p. 91.

## Chapter 5

### The queen restored: from Nijmegen to Rotfeld

For the annalist at Chelles, the Nijmegen assembly in October 830 marked an end to Judith's ordeal at the hands of Pippin and Lothar. Abbess Heilwig, understandably, harboured no doubts about the legitimacy of Judith's status as queen or the emperor's attachment to his wife. At Nijmegen, Louis the Pious made a public commitment to the restoration of Judith to her rightful place as his wife and empress.

'At that same assembly through apostolic authority and with the agreement of the bishops the emperor was given canonical approval to receive his wife again. At once he [the emperor] sent to the great men of his kingdom telling them to lead her with all honour to him. Afterwards, on her account, he sent his son Charles and his brother bishop Drogo with other important men to meet her on the way and they then brought her to the palace of Aachen with great honour. After the Nijmegen assembly the lord emperor himself returned to the palace of Aachen to spend the winter and there he received the empress Judith and he restored to her pristine honour.'<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis here is on the immediate and unequivocal recognition of Judith's honour, and status as the wife of the emperor. The sending of Charles and Drogo with the *optimates*, to meet Judith on her the journey to Aachen, the *sedes regni*, is even reminiscent of the emperor's own approach to Aachen at his accession. The emperor's

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<sup>1</sup> 'In eodem ergo placito per auctoritatem apostolicam sive per consensum episcoporum consideratum et canonice definitum est, ut memoratus imperator suam reciperet uxorem. Qui statim propter eam optimates regni sui misit, ut eam honorifice ad se adducerent. Postea vero Carolum filium suum et Drogonem episcopum, fratrem videlicet suum, cum aliis optimatibus obviam ei misit, qui eam ad Aquasgrani palacium cum magno honore deducerent. Predicto quoque placito peracto in Niumaga inde reversus domnus imperator ad Aquisgrani palacium ad hiemandum pervenit, ubi et suam coniugem, predictam Iudith imperatricem, recepit atque eam pristino honori restituit'. *AM*, an 830, pp. 97-8.

brother Drogo, a great churchman and *palatinus*, and the representatives of the court itself came out to greet her and restore her to her role at the centre of palace life. Judith's legitimacy as Louis's queen and empress is further underlined by the author's insistence, a few lines earlier in the annal, that at the time of her marriage in 819 she had been both crowned and acclaimed as empress.<sup>2</sup> Yet the stress on Judith's legitimate queenly status draws attention both to the particular preoccupations of Heilwig's annalist and the degree of self-censorship at work here. This annal celebrating Judith's return is deliberately misleading. In fact the Nijmegen assembly in October was very far from the end of Judith's ordeal. Louis the Pious may have misread the political mood on the eve of Pippin's coup but he was politically astute enough to realise that the charges laid against Judith and Bernard, and therefore against the moral probity of the royal palace itself, were too serious to be brushed aside.

Judith had been removed from her husband 'unjustly and without due process of law and judgement'; nevertheless at Nijmegen it was decided that the empress appear before the February assembly at Aachen to answer any charges against her.<sup>3</sup> The opportunity was provided so that 'if any free man wanted to charge her with any crime, either she should defend herself according to the laws, or she should undergo the judgement of the Franks'.<sup>4</sup> A wife accused of adultery, even a queen, defended her chastity through the ordeal. There are two examples of Frankish queens put to the ordeal from later in the ninth century. In 858, the empress Theutberga's champion had undergone the ordeal by boiling water, plunging his hand into a cauldron to retrieve a stone, to defend her from charges of incest and sodomy; Charles the Fat's queen Richardis cleared herself, again via a champion, of the accusation of adultery in 887 through the ordeal of burning

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<sup>2</sup> *AM*, an 830, p. 95-6.

<sup>3</sup> *AB*, an 830, p 3.

<sup>4</sup> Nelson, *Annals of St Bertin*, p. 22.

ploughshares.<sup>5</sup> But this was never likely to have happened to Judith because, unlike the cases of the unfortunate Theutberga and Richardis, the accusations against her had not originated with her husband. The political groundwork for the exoneration of Judith and the February assembly was prepared during the Christmas period. Yet despite the fact that the emperor was clearly committed to the restoration of his wife there was a degree of ambiguity about Judith's status in the intervening three months. Notwithstanding the assurances of the Chelles annalist, Louis the Pious did not receive her as his queen until she had purged herself of the adultery accusation.<sup>6</sup> Nithard spells out what this meant: Judith was not re-admitted to the conjugal bed.<sup>7</sup> There was an obvious practical reason for this decision which owes nothing to the niceties of canon law: if Judith was pregnant by Bernard (was this whispered amongst Pippin's camp?) then this time apart from Louis the Pious would confirm her chastity. There was a doubt about Judith's marital status. The Chelles annalist drew attention to this by insisting on ecclesiastical sanction for Judith's return as Louis's wife. The veiling of Judith at Compiègne, the penalty for her alleged adultery, cast a question mark over her marital status. Rituals, both secular and religious, had to be enacted before the appropriate audiences before Judith could be received again as Louis's wife and queen. Caesar's wife had to be demonstrably above suspicion.

The day appointed for the Aachen assembly was 2nd February, the Marian feast of the Purification and the smaller assembly attended by the emperor's *optimates*. This was not

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<sup>5</sup> Richardis: Regino, *Chronicon*, ed. F Kurze, MGH SRG, Hanover, (1890), an 887, p. 127; Theutberga: AB, an 858, p. R. Bartlett makes the point that 'questions of sexual purity' were a major category in which the ordeal was used, but that they were only employed as a last resort and then within a system which recognised other forms of proof such as compurgation, *Trial by fire and water: the medieval judicial ordeal*, Oxford, (1986), pp. 11-26; see also Bühner-Thierry, 'La Reine adultère', pp. 307-9.

<sup>6</sup> Astron, cap. 46, p. 464.

<sup>7</sup> Nithard, however, errs in placing Judith's compurgation after the rebellion of 833: I, cap. 4, pp. 18-20; there is no evidence that Judith was deliberately excluded from court as suggested by Collins, 'Pippin I', p. 384.



then, the larger gathering of the host in late Spring which was more difficult to manage politically. The fullest account of the proceedings is provided by the palace annalist and it has the flavour of a writer observing and participating in the events before him or at least recording them in a highly structured fashion. Nothing would have been left to chance in the highly ritualised proceedings that followed. Any dissent from the emperor's plans would surely have been dealt with during the Christmas season and January. Indeed the order and structure of the palace annalist's narrative read as stage directions for the conduct of a well-rehearsed drama in which all the players were word-perfect. First the 'conspirators' from Compiègne and Nijmegen, held in custody since October, appeared and were sentenced to death 'on the judgement of the people'. The 'customary piety' of the emperor commuted the penalty to imprisonment. Lothar received his father's pardon.<sup>8</sup>

Then came Judith's moment:

'The lady empress came to the assembly, just as she had been commanded, and in the sight of the lord emperor accompanied by his sons said that she was willing to purge herself of all accusations; and all the people there were asked if there was any person who wished to accuse her of any crime. And when nobody was found who wished to bring a charge she purged herself, according to the judgement of the Franks, of everything of which she had been accused'.<sup>9</sup>

Judith did not stand alone before the assembly at Aachen : she was supported by her brothers.<sup>10</sup> The oaths of a woman, even those of a queen, counted for less than those of

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<sup>8</sup> AB, an 831, pp. 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> *'Ad quod placitum domina imperatrix, sicut iussum fuerat, veniens et in conspectu domni imperatoris ac filiorum eius assistens, de cunctis se obicientibus purificare velle aiebat; percunctatusque est omnis populus si quislibet in eam aliquod crimen obicere vellet; cumque nullus inventus esset qui quodlibet illi malum inferret, purificavit se secundum iudicium Francorum de omnibus quibus accusata fuerat', ibid., p. 4.*

<sup>10</sup> Nithard, I, cap. 3, p. 12.

her male kin. Conrad and Rudolf were oath-helpers and in assisting Judith they participated in their own political rehabilitation. Judith's brothers had been tonsured and imprisoned in Aquitanian monasteries by Pippin whilst she had been held at Poitiers. Their public support of Judith indicates that the emperor was also committed to their return. This was a critical time for Louis; punishment of the 'conspirators' had to be balanced against the exigent need for faithful *proceres* and Judith's brothers were two men who might naturally incline towards loyalty because both had been targeted as enemies by Pippin and his supporters. But if Conrad and Rudolf were re-established largely because their experience in 830 made them likely allies, this principle was not applied to Bernard. The chamberlain had fled to Septimania when the rebellion broke and had not been recalled to the palace when Louis regained power. The hostility expressed in the sources towards Bernard during the coup, including the 830 palace annal, suggests that his return to the court was not judged to be compatible with Louis's recovery of power.<sup>11</sup> Yet to complete the restoration of Judith it was essential that Bernard, her alleged lover, was also cleared of the charges against him. This public process of restoration was completed before the assembly at Thionville in October 831 which was attended by Bernard. When no plaintiff came forward to accuse him of any crime Bernard purged himself of the accusations.<sup>12</sup> Thionville marked the departure, and it proved to be permanent, of the former chamberlain from a position of influence in the royal household; a successful outcome of the coup for Pippin and Lothar. Bernard, of course, was also a convenient scapegoat once the emperor was restored to power.

There was one further problem to be addressed before Judith could return to the marriage bed. It was necessary to clarify her marital status in the eyes of the church. Thegan maintains that Louis received her again as his wife on the authority of the Frankish

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<sup>11</sup> *AB*, an 830, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, an 831, p. 4.

bishops and pope Gregory himself.<sup>13</sup> The Chelles account of Judith's restoration is also emphatic on the point of episcopal sanction.<sup>14</sup> For there was ambiguity as the Astronomer's account of the events at Compiègne in 830 makes clear.<sup>15</sup> What is significant here is not whether Judith had actually entered upon any religious life at Poitiers but that her time there might have been interpreted in this light. Loyal bishops were called upon to affirm the validity and so the indissolubility of the imperial marriage.

Louis's recovery of power and Judith's return to the palace in 830 are inextricably linked. The restoration of Judith was clearly a matter of considerable importance to Louis the Pious. It was not a strategy entirely without risk. Louis may have been a skillful manager of the general assembly but the appearance of a royal wife before a Frankish assembly in order to clear herself of an accusation of unchastity was unprecedented. Without doubt this was a stage-managed occasion, but the structure of the ritual at the Aachen assembly allowed any persisting political resentment of Judith to be acted on. So why, then, did Louis the Pious promote the restoration of Judith's queenship so vigorously? I think an answer lies in the fact that the imperial marriage was central to Louis's concept of his rule. It is also true that the ritual drama enacted at Aachen in February 831, where the emperor passed sentence on the rebels, was a demonstration of his political authority. The public re-acceptance of Judith as wife and empress signified the emperor's determination to restore the *status quo*. Louis's actions were a marker of a renewed and uncompromising attitude to his sons. And Judith's central role in the recovery of imperial authority in the winter of 830/31 is matched by the evidence for her increasing political activity after 830.

There were, of course, other views on the failure of the rebellion and the vindication of Judith than those expressed in the pro-Louis sources. In 833 Agobard was to denounce

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<sup>13</sup> Thegan, cap. 37, p. 224.

<sup>14</sup> *AM*, an 830, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> See above, chapter 4.

Judith's reinstatement in the palace. She had wormed her way back into the imperial household through carnal blandishments and again held authority 'as if a legitimate wife'.<sup>16</sup> The strongest claims for Judith's influence after 830 are made, not surprisingly, by Radbert. Indeed in the *Epitaphium* Judith's powers over her husband and the palace knew no earthly limits; she now had command of the elements!<sup>17</sup> But there is other more concrete material that can be placed beside both Radbert and Agobard and the pro-Judith propaganda of Chelles. It is the imperial diplomas, with their hard evidence of political relationships, which become a significant category of evidence for Judith's career in the years between 831 and Lothar's rebellion in July 833. They reveal the empress at the centre of patronage networks.

The majority of the evidence for Judith's political activity is to be found in the years after 830 and her return to the palace from Poitiers. The vehemence of the attack on Judith in 830 shows that she was not perceived as a political bystander. The mostly unofficial channels of political contact open to Judith in the royal household would have left no mark in more formal written sources. So here we confront a problem. Does the increase in the evidence for Judith's career in the 830s - in a variety of sources both literary and diplomatic - signify a corresponding increase in her political activity? I think that it does. The experience of the rebellion in 830 - and her later exile in 833 - politicized her. This is not a new argument, indeed Böhmer argued that Judith was now motivated by a desire to revenge her humiliation in 830.<sup>18</sup> The explanation may be more mundane. As Pauline Stafford has argued, opposition to a queen - where she survived it - was useful as a means of identifying the sources of hostility.<sup>19</sup> This was knowledge bought at a high price, yet it had considerable value to a younger, second wife like Judith, who had to

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<sup>16</sup> *LA II*, cap. 3, p. 316.

<sup>17</sup> *Epitaphium*, II, cap. 16, p. 84.

<sup>18</sup> BM2, nos. 881a; 895c.

<sup>19</sup> Stafford, *Queens*, p. 95.



neutralise this hostility if she wished to secure her own future and that of her son into the reign of her husband's successor. The vulnerability of Judith's position had been illustrated to her in the rebellion. The generation gap in the imperial family and the political frustrations of Louis's adult sons who had growing sons of their own was now out in the open. The most dynamic factor in Judith's increasing political profile in the decade 830 to 840 was the need to achieve some kind of *rapprochement* with Irmengard's sons in order to secure the future of Charles, her own son. The evidence for Judith's direct activity increases after Louis's reassertion of authority in October 830. The recovery of power had to be based on the loyalty of leading men, some of them perhaps brought in to create new patronage networks between the palace and beyond. Louis the Pious, who had gone to considerable lengths to reinstate his empress, may now, more than ever, have looked to her as one of his faithful *proceres* in the palace. Emperor and empress also had a shared interest: the endowment of their son Charles the Bald.

Louis has a reputation for being 'soft' on rebels, both sons and *proceres*, but leniency is not the appropriate term to categorize his responses to the 830 rebels. The emperor's hard line on filial obedience was, of course, apparent in the February assembly at Aachen in 831 when Lothar was made to condemn his fellow rebels and ordered to return to Italy; he was not to move north of the Alps without his father's permission. Other signs of Louis's intentions to control his sons, in which Judith's interests can be identified, can be found very early in 831. Just over three weeks after Judith's purgation on February 2nd, her seven-year old son Charles appeared as joint '*ambasciator*' with one Guntbald in a diploma dated the twenty fifth of February on behalf of the monastery of Kempten.<sup>20</sup> This is the only diploma in which Charles the Bald is named in this capacity. As a child Charles has a high profile in the sources: running ahead of the imperial procession in Ermold's account of the baptism of the Danes in 826, walking hand in hand with his mother in Walahfrid's reverie on the court '*De imagine Tetrici*', and at the age of six

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<sup>20</sup> Sickel, L279, p. 169.

granted the duchy of Alemannia.<sup>21</sup> Aside from the endowment of August 829 'by decree', this is the first formal appearance of Charles the Bald in Carolingian politics. But how different is this unusual diploma from the representations of Charles in the poetry? A seven-year old boy cannot be a power-broker, his role as '*ambasciator*' can only be symbolic. First, it might be seen as another symbol of Judith's restoration as queen; a tacit statement that the experience of his mother had cast no slur on the legitimacy of Charles. There is also the Alemannian context. The diploma is on behalf of an Alemannian monastery, that is within Charles's *regnum*, yet on no other occasion is he associated in a diploma with an Alemannian monastery, such as St Gall or Reichenau, although of course this may reflect the sources uneven pattern of survival.

It is more profitable to look instead at the figure of Guntbald, the status of Charles and the timing of this diploma. Who was this Guntbald, who incidentally, also made a first appearance here as an '*ambasciator*'? Nithard noted that a monk called Guntbald had played a crucial role in the negotiations which had led to the release of the emperor in 830.<sup>22</sup> Yet the historian distrusted Guntbald's loyalty which, as he saw it, was motivated by a desire to replace Bernard as 'second in the empire', that is as the power behind the king. The date of the diploma suggests an identification with Nithard's schemer who as a reward for his efforts seems to have found a niche near the centre of power. But if there was any one *palatinus* who might be described as 'second in the empire', that is the power behind the king, in 831 then it was not Guntbald but the seneschal Adalhard. Guntbald did not step into Bernard's shoes as chamberlain. Yet Nithard had also described Bernard as the specially appointed 'protector' of Charles the Bald.<sup>23</sup> If Guntbald took on this role then it would naturally have brought him into closer contact with the empress. It is Guntbald whom the monastery of Kempten identified as a patron at court. The emperor associated his son with Guntbald in the diploma as a token of Charles's authority

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<sup>21</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>22</sup> Nithard, I, cap. 3, pp. 12-14.

<sup>23</sup> Nithard I, cap 3, p.10.

in Alemannia. The document signifies that there was to be no reneging on Louis's grant of Alemannia to Charles, nor any downgrading of his status.

This diploma in favour of Kempten is significant because it is dated, thus allowing the capturing of political alignments inside and outside the royal household at a particular moment in time. This is not true for all diplomas or other evidence for the 830s. The new '*divisio*' of the *regnum*, which seems to supersede the succession arrangements of 817, cannot be dated with such precision but it is equally revealing of Louis's political priorities. The document belongs to the years after the rebellion of 830 and before the death of Pippin in 838, it was probably issued at the February assembly at Aachen in 831.<sup>24</sup> In essence it was a reissue of Charlemagne's succession arrangements of 806 and made no provision for the imperial title. The *regnum* was to be divided into three on the death of Louis, between Pippin, the young Louis, and Charles the Bald whose duchy of Alammanian was to be augmented with most of Burgundy, Provence and Gothia. Lothar was not mentioned but presumably the kingdom of Italy was reserved to him. Where this *divisio* parted from the arrangements in 806 was in an ominous new clause. The three sons were given the opportunity to increase their prospective shares of the *regnum* if they showed themselves more loyal than their brothers. The *divisio* should probably be understood as a draft, a discussion document indicative of the attitude of the emperor to his sons rather than as a formal and final proposal on the succession.<sup>25</sup> It was not sanctioned by an assembly or given the kind of official status that had surrounded the *ordinatio* of 817 or even the grant of Alemannia to Charles the Bald at in 829, which was conducted before the Worms assembly. The policy of divide and rule that had been implicit in his actions towards his sons in the 820s is explicit in this document. It is a sign of Louis's hardened attitude towards his elder sons, of his determination to confine Lothar to Italy and also an indication that the future succession arrangements were still

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<sup>24</sup> *Divisio regnorum*, MGH Capit., II, 194, pp. 20-24 ; Simson, *Jahrbücher*, I, p. 392

<sup>25</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 89-90.



negotiable.<sup>26</sup> Prospects had opened of Charles the Bald being assigned a tranche of the Frankish heartlands. Everything was still to play for. This development offered Judith chances to influence politics in her own interests. Yet there was a potential danger for Judith if Louis's relations with her stepsons were to degenerate further and become confrontational.

These two documents, the Kempten diploma and the *divisio* reveal a toughening of Louis's attitude to his sons early in 831, but although the emperor's responses were vigorous they were also tempered with caution. The rebels sentenced to imprisonment at Aachen in February were released after the assembly at Thionville in ~~May~~<sup>October</sup>. Thionville also marked the departure of the former chamberlain Bernard from a position of influence in the royal household. Mindful that the rebellion had found most support in the western part of the empire, Louis's itinerary for 831 was centred prudently in Francia, based on the heartlands and palaces of Aachen, Herstal and Ingelheim. It was only in 832, when he felt assured of his support in the east, that Louis prepared to move west towards Neustria and Aquitaine, where the rebellion had found most support. Louis was careful not to repeat the 'mistakes' he had made in 830, when, moving towards the north-west coast, he had left Judith behind at Aachen with Bernard, creating the conditions in which she could be accused of adultery. Louis the German, who had not participated in the coup of 830, and was now frustrated at the lack of acknowledgement of his loyalty, as evidenced in the provisions of the new *divisio*, raised arms against his father in the spring of 832 and entered Alemannia. When the emperor had to move suddenly from Aachen against the young Louis, the emperor took Judith with him but left her behind the army at the fortified palace of Salz on the Saale, an affluent of the Main.<sup>27</sup>

It was relations with Pippin which remained a problem for Louis the Pious: he failed to appear at the assembly at Thionville in 831 and fell out with his father the emperor during

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<sup>26</sup> I rely here on Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 90.

<sup>27</sup> AB, an 832, p. 7.



Christmas at Aachen, returning to Aquitaine where he found a new and hitherto unlikely ally in the recently demoted Bernard of Septimania.<sup>28</sup> The dominant preoccupation of Louis the Pious from 832 was the destruction of Pippin's power in Aquitaine. Apart from the diversion in the spring to deal with the rebellious Louis the German, in mid-summer the itinerary moved westward.<sup>29</sup> There is evidence of Louis both re-negotiating and reinforcing relationships with the aristocracy in order to strengthen political loyalty in Aquitaine and Neustria. Odo was reinstated as count at Orleans.<sup>30</sup> When, in the autumn of 832, news reached Louis the Pious that Bernard of Septimania was 'lingering in Aquitaine' in league with the recalcitrant Pippin, the emperor deprived the erstwhile chamberlain of his *honores*; he was replaced by Berengar, a member of the royal kin.<sup>31</sup> Abbot Hilduin, a rebel in 830, was reconciled to the emperor and by the end of August 832 was restored to office at St Denis.<sup>32</sup> A loyal *palatinus* Aldric, the emperor's confessor, was installed as bishop before Christmas 832 at Le Mans, the 'boulevard of Neustria'.<sup>33</sup> But it was in the Paris basin that Louis the Pious found his most loyal support after 830, in the family of Adalhard the new seneschal, and, after 834, abbot of St Martin, Tours. Gerard, Adalhard's brother, was count of Paris. Their sister, Ingeltrude, was married to count Odo of Orleans.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> As note 26.

<sup>29</sup> BM2, nos. 905 - 912.

<sup>30</sup> Odo died as count of Orleans in 834, Simson, *Jahrbücher*, II, pp. 102-05.

<sup>31</sup> Thegan, cap. 54, p. 248; Astron, cap. 57, p. 518.

<sup>32</sup> Sickel, L303, p. 177, (26th August 832).

<sup>33</sup> P Le Maître, emphasises the geographical, political and economic importance of Le Mans as a centre for the region and the control of Neustria, 'L'oeuvre d'Aldric du Mans et sa signification (822-857)', *Francia*, 8, (1980) pp. 43-64, especially 44-45.

<sup>34</sup> Hennebicque-Le Jan, 'Prosopographica', no 281, pp. 265-66. For Adalhard's family see below, note 54

In September, at the assembly at the royal palace of Jouac in Limousin, Louis deprived his son Pippin of the kingdom of Aquitaine and the assembled magnates had to swear new oaths of fidelity to Judith's son Charles, a nine-year-old boy.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore Pippin, his queen, Ringart, and their family were 'deported' from the kingdom of Aquitaine and sent into Francia. Pippin was held in custody at Trier.<sup>36</sup> What were the emperor's plans for Pippin and family? Louis the Pious had, after all, had his own nephew blinded for rebellion in 818. Pippin escaped and slipped back to Aquitaine.<sup>37</sup> The transfer of the kingdom of Aquitaine to Charles the Bald suggests Judith's involvement yet Charles's 'rule' of Aquitaine would remain unstable whilst Pippin was alive. The modest *regnum* of Alemannia had at least been a realistic and achievable portion for Charles in 829; Pippin's kingdom was unworkable as a portion for Charles in the early 830s. The family politics of the later 830s are certainly marked by Judith's attempts to create a political consensus for the endowment of Charles the Bald with a share of the *regnum Francorum*; but equally strong as a theme in the sources seems the determination of Louis the Pious to neutralise opposition from his recalcitrant sons. Charles the Bald may or may not have been the most beloved son of his father, 'a second Benjamin', as Walahfrid had called him. A child under the age of ten was certainly easier to control and manage politically than a grown man, such as Pippin, with children of his own. Pippin's fears that Charles might inherit the *regnum* as his father's heir and his 'hatred' for Charles and Judith make sense in the context of Jouac. Louis's priority was to deprive Pippin of power in Aquitaine as much as it was about the aggrandisement of Charles the Bald. Charles the Bald could be used as a tool for controlling his brothers. It is within the context of Jouac and the *divisio* that the Chelles annal describing the motivation of Pippin in 830 makes

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<sup>35</sup> AB, an 832, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Nithard, I, cap. 4, p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> AB, an 833, pp. 8-9.

sense.<sup>38</sup> The annexation of Aquitaine by Louis the Pious was arguably an act of paternal terrorism which precipitated civil war: Louis the German and Lothar now raised arms against their father. It was only the winter, and the lack of fodder to enable the movement of armies, which postponed the confrontation. The winter was spent preparing the ground politically and ideologically, the result was a paper war as father and sons faced each other at Rotfeld in Alsace early in the summer of 833. It is against this political background that the evidence of the diplomas assumes significance.

Judith requested four diplomas in the period between her restoration at Nijmegen and the capture of the imperial couple at Rotfeld in June 833. The first two diplomas in which Judith acted as an *ambasciator* were issued in the autumn of 831, around the time of the Thionville assembly. The imperial household had moved into the Vosges mountains for the seasonal hunt following the May assembly.<sup>39</sup> Hunting was a communal ritual and its role in affirming social bonds at Louis's court in the 820s had, of course, been described at length by the poet Ermold.<sup>40</sup> In the aftermath of the coup and the recovery of power, hunting provided Louis the Pious with an important opportunity to activate and renew personal ties with his leading men.<sup>41</sup> The participation of women of the court, especially the queen, is suggested by Ermold who described Judith riding out from Ingelheim with her husband, son and the *proceres*.<sup>42</sup> Yet Ermold emphasises that involvement was also strongly gendered - men and women had different roles within the hunt. Judith replicated

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<sup>38</sup> Thus *AM*, an 830, pp. 96-7.

<sup>39</sup> '*in partes Rumeric montis per vosagum transiit, ibique piscationi atque venantioni quamdiu libuit indulxit*', *Astron*, cap 46, p. 466; *AB*, an 831, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>41</sup> J Jarnut, has drawn attention to the political role of hunting in the making and maintenance of a group identity around the king, 'Die frühmittelalterliche Jagd unter rechts-und sozialgeschichtlichen Aspekten', in *Settimane di Studio*, 3, (1985), pp. 765-98, see also J L Nelson, 'The Lord's anointed and the people's choice: Carolingian royal ritual', in *The Frankish World 750-900*, pp. 99-131, at 120-24.

<sup>42</sup> See above, chapter 3..



her queenly function of mistress in the household by providing a feast outdoors. The convivial social experience of the hunt in the Remiremont area provided the ideal conditions for the negotiation of patronage, political friendships and influence within the political elite at court. It is against this background that we find formal evidence of Judith's activity as a political patron. The first diploma, dated 19th October, is in favour of abbess Rotrude and the convent of Hohenberg in Alsace.<sup>43</sup> The second, issued at the palace of Ingelheim just over two weeks later on the 4th November, is a confirmation of the privileges of the community of St. Martin at Tours including a grant of free abbatial election.<sup>44</sup>

The Hohenburg diploma was a grant of 14 *mancipia* with labour services and land to the monastery. The convent of Hohenberg had been founded c.667 by Etih, duke of Alsace. The Carolingians were not the only family with a keen sense of their ancient origins and Hohenberg was the centre of the cult of St Odilia, Etih's daughter, and the family saint. Etih and his descendants were still renowned in the reign of Louis the Pious: Thegan could identify count Hugh of Tours as '*de stirpe cuiusdam ducis nomine Etih*'.<sup>45</sup> But who was Rotrude? It is likely that the abbess of Etih's foundation would be able to claim descent from this family. Thegan's awareness of the lineage of Hugh of Tours and the prominent position he enjoyed at court in the 820s suggests that Hohenberg would have looked to this descendant of Etih as a patron. The fall of Hugh in 828 would have obliged Rotrude to find new contacts and patrons in the royal household. Judith acted as an *ambasciator* for Hohenburg again in 837, when the convent received royal protection.<sup>46</sup> The empress may have been a natural patron for female communities and

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<sup>43</sup> Sickel, L 292, p. 173.

<sup>44</sup> Sickel, L 293, pp. 173-4; Bouquet VI, 171, p. 573.

<sup>45</sup> Thegan, cap. 28, p. 216; F Vollmer, 'Die Etichonen', in *Studien und Vorarbeiten*, pp. 137-84.

<sup>46</sup> See above, chapter 7.



may have played this role in an informal sense for all convents. There is a scrap of evidence to suggest this. In a letter to Judith, which we can probably date to the 830s, Abbess Thiathild of Remiremont described the convent as 'your monastery' although this may also be a joint reference to the imperial couple.<sup>47</sup> But the most interesting feature of this diploma is that the empress is not the sole intercessor for Hohenberg. Rotrude obtained the diploma through the joint petition of Judith and the seneschal Adalhard.

Adalhard rises in 831 to a position of influence in the royal household and closeness to Judith and Louis. There is no earlier evidence for him at court which suggests that he did not hold the office of seneschal in the 820s. It is significant that it is in the period after the rebellion of 830 and the recovery of power that Adalhard first appears as one of the *potentes*. Nithard's remarks about Guntbald's bid for influence in the royal household reveal the fierce competition for political power around the emperor.<sup>48</sup> What distinguished Adalhard's political career from that of other *palatini* was his ability to maintain his hold on power. The six diplomas from the 830s, in which he acts as an intercessor, map out his role as a political patron in the royal household.<sup>49</sup> This means that, in terms of the diploma evidence, Adalhard is the only figure in the palace who can be compared with the empress in terms of political patronage. Unlike Judith's, Adalhard's interventions in diplomas date only from 831 onwards. The rewards from loyal service and the opportunities for gain at this level were enormous. After the death of Theoto in 834 Adalhard combined the office of seneschal with the lay abbacy of St. Martin's, Tours.<sup>50</sup> Here indeed was a successful player in the dangerous 'Carolingian roulette' for *honores*

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<sup>47</sup> '*vestrum monasterium*', Indicularius Thiathildis, 3-4, MGH Form., pp. 526-7; Depreux, 'Prosopographie', p.284.

<sup>48</sup> Nithard, I, cap. 4, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> Sickel: L292, p. 173; L348, p. 192; L360, p. 196; L361, p. 196; L370-2, pp. 199-200.

<sup>50</sup> Lot, F 'Note sur le seneschal Alard', *Le Moyen Age*, 2nd ser, 12, (1908) pp. 185-201; Oexle, *Forschungen zu monastischen und geistlichen Gemeinschaften im westfränkischen Bereich*, Münster Mittelalter-Schriften 31, Munich, (1978), pp. 39-40.

and power. Nithard, commenting on the marriage of his patron Charles the Bald to Adalhard's niece Irmintrude in December 842, looked back on what he saw as the seneschal's self-interested abuse of power in Louis's reign.<sup>51</sup> Nithard's comments may well be those of a man disappointed in his erstwhile patron but his outburst against the seneschal also recognizes the central position such a man could hold in the household of Louis the Pious.<sup>52</sup>

An examination of Adalhard's family connections in the context of the emperor's political needs after 830 may suggest how he had achieved this position in the imperial household and closeness to Judith. Adalhard's ancestors had a history of service to the Carolingians which went back three generations.<sup>53</sup> Adalhard's grandfather, Gerard I, had been count of Paris in the eighth century; his father was probably Leuthard count of Fézensac who had served the young Louis when king of Aquitaine; his brother, Gerard II, was also count of Paris in the reign of Louis the Pious.<sup>54</sup> Thiathild of Remiremont dared to remind Adalhard of their kinship.<sup>55</sup> The marriage of his sister Ingeltrude to Odo could be associated with Louis the Pious, making Odo count of Orleans in 828. So what of the

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<sup>51</sup> Nithard, IV, cap. 6, p. 142.

<sup>52</sup> For Nithard's disappointment with his patron Adalhard, see J L Nelson, 'Public "Histories" and Private History in the Work of Nithard', *Speculum*, 60 (1985) pp. 251-93.

<sup>53</sup> See Appendix I, to Werner, 'Bedeutende Adelsfamilien', *Karl der Grosse I*, pp. 133-37.

<sup>54</sup> On members of this important family see Hennebicque-Le Jan, 'Prosopographica': Adalhard: no 11, pp. 239 -40; Leuthard: no 203, p. 258; Gerard II: no 107; p. 249.

<sup>55</sup> '... si ausa sum dicere, de consanguinitatis propinquitate, praesumo vobis supplicare, ...', *Indiculus Thiathildis*, p. 527. This may be a feminine expression employed when addressing a powerful male relative. Gisela uses a similar phrase to address her brother king Charles the Bald in 869, see de Coussemaker, nos 3 and 4, pp. 7-8. Cf. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 15-16. On Thiathild see E Hlawitschka, *Studien zur Äbtissinnenreihe von Remiremont*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Landeskunde des Saarlandes, 9, Saarbrücken, (1963), pp. 36-8.

experience of Adalhard and his siblings in the crisis of 830 when the Frankish aristocracy in Neustria had been forced to take sides? Paris had, after all, been a meeting point for the rebels who had refused to join the Brittany expedition. The decision of Hilduin of St Denis, for example, to declare for Pippin may not have been taken freely. René Louis assumed that Adalhard's brother Gerard was already count of Paris before 830 and that Adalhard's rise to power under Louis the Pious was the result of the emperor's gratitude for loyal service.<sup>56</sup> But the position of count Gerard at Paris, and indeed of Adalhard, may have been more equivocal. The advancement of Adalhard to the office of seneschal, and possibly of Gerard to his countship, may well have been the reward for their loyalty in 830. Yet it is equally possible that Adalhard and Gerard had wavered in their allegiance to the emperor in 830 and their subsequent advancement was meant to fix their future loyalty. Louis the Pious, after 830, certainly had an exigent need for faithful men in Neustria and Aquitaine.

So in 831 Louis needed the support of Adalhard and his family - but did Judith? Why was she coupled with Adalhard as a joint petitioner in the Hohenberg diploma? It is Judith alone who is the petitioner for the nuns in the diploma for 837: a time when the seneschal was a powerful figure at court and requested charters himself.<sup>57</sup> Adalhard was the seneschal, the household officer who, according to both *De Ordine Palatii* and *De Villis*, had responsibility together with the queen for provisioning the itinerant palace, would certainly have meant a working relationship with Judith.<sup>58</sup> Both Judith and Adalhard occupied inter-dependent positions in the household and that meant co-operation. Joint petitions, such as that of empress and seneschal in the 831 Hohenberg diploma, are rare. (The Kempton diploma is another example of a joint petition from this

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<sup>56</sup> René Louis, *Girard, Comte de Vienne*, (... 819-877), 3 vols., Paris, (1946) vol I, pp. 38-9.

<sup>57</sup> Sickel, L 349, p. 192, (9th March, 837).

<sup>58</sup> See above, chapter 3,



period but one which I have already argued should be interpreted symbolically.) Perhaps the Hohenberg diploma may be read as evidence of a political alliance between Judith and Adalhard. The fact that this connection surfaces in a formal document suggests this relationship was public and, therefore, surely approved by the emperor. This is a further indication that Judith was adroit at aligning herself with *potentes* in the royal palace, with the men who mattered; in the 820s we can identify archbishop Ebo, counts Hugh and Matfred and, finally, Bernard as close associates. In the aftermath of the failed coup of 830 Louis the Pious needed to recruit a new group of *proceres* to help him isolate his sons, especially Pippin. Judith shared these concerns but had her own particular agenda which was to ensure her own future and that of her son into the next political generation, that is after the death of the emperor. The *potentes* in the household might come and go around her but Judith's long term interests remained the same. After 830 she too needed to knit her son into the network of powerful men in the palace and beyond it. Adalhard was a powerful ally and doubly so if Louis the Pious already entertained plans for carving out a *regnum* for Charles the Bald in western Francia. Yet the issue of gender is also raised here. The diplomas reinforce the impression of Judith's unique political position as the queen and thus both her prominence and isolation as a woman at court. This was dangerous. Close relationships with powerful men in the royal household were double-edged as they too had enemies: the political gains of alliances with men like Adalhard, and indeed Bernard before him, had to be offset against a heightened vulnerability to accusations of unchastity. This was a lesson from 830.

The Hohenberg diploma signals Adalhard's arrival in the royal household and is testimony to his political proximity to both emperor and empress. It was whilst Louis and Judith were at Thionville that our second diploma, on behalf of St Martin's, Tours was issued on November 4th. Abbot Fridugis obtained a confirmation of the monastery's privileges, granted by Charlemagne, which freed the house from the control of the bishop of Tours. The emperor also granted the monastery the right of free election on the death of



Fridugis.<sup>59</sup> St Martin, patron of the Merovingians, had been eagerly adopted by the Carolingians.<sup>60</sup> The monastery at Tours was the guardian of the body of this great and powerful saint. In the words of the diploma, free election was granted by Louis the Pious 'out of reverence for our patron, the blessed bishop Martin'.<sup>61</sup> A due reverence for Saint Martin was probably a keen motive for Louis in 831 when he stood in need of the strong prayers of the community and the mighty protection of the soldier saint. But the emperor also needed to be sure of the political loyalty of the community and the faithfulness of the monastery's military contingent. For Tours had been in the front line during the crisis of 830 both politically and geographically, standing as it did on the southern bank of the Loire and so at the 'frontier' of Aquitaine and Neustria. Count Hugh, removed by Louis the Pious in 828, had allied himself with Pippin in 830 and had reclaimed his benefice - and any other lands he held in the area - by force. There is also the question of mixed loyalties within the community itself. The prestige and power of St Martin had also attracted the patronage of Pippin of Aquitaine.<sup>62</sup> So it is doubtful that the emperor intended granting immediate autonomy to the community of St Martin's.<sup>63</sup> Indeed the house had a history of close connections with the Carolingian royal household: Fridugis was the imperial chancellor and had succeeded his teacher and fellow Englishman Alcuin as abbot. When Fridugis died in August 833 he was succeeded as abbot by another *palatinus*, Theoto.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> L293, p. 173-4; Bouquet, VI, p. 573.

<sup>60</sup> See above, chapter 1, for Charlemagne's donation of the estates of San Salvatore to St Martin's in 774.

<sup>61</sup> '*ob reverentiam beati Martini pontificis patroni nostri*', Bouquet, VI, p. 573.

<sup>62</sup> Levillain, 10, p. 31 (10th, March 828)

<sup>63</sup> Louis the Pious made very few grants of free election, see Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, pp. 230, 265.

<sup>64</sup> Fridugis had succeeded Alcuin at Tours in 806 and had served Louis as chancellor since 819. We can trace his career in the household from his subscriptions to diplomas

This is the only diploma in which Judith acts as an intercessor for the community and it may mark her own devotion to the cult of St Martin. The closeness of the Tours diploma to that for Hohenberg, which was a sign of Judith's renewed status as a powerbroker, may be relevant in finding a more political context. There was also the question of prestige, the diploma was a grant of free election and a golden *bull*a was attached to it. The Tours diploma links Judith in a formal context with another household official in the autumn of 831. Fridugis, the chancellor and abbot of St Martin's, was, like the seneschal Adalhard, another powerful contact in a network of friendships and alliances in the royal household and, of course, Neustria. Judith may have sought to encourage Martin's community to look on her as their patron in the palace.

The second pair of diplomas belong to a different period, that is the late autumn and early winter of 832/3 before the renewed outbreak of civil war. In November 832, Louis the Pious had deprived Pippin of the kingdom of Aquitaine and imprisoned him at Trier but he had escaped and was now at liberty in Aquitaine to muster support against his father.<sup>65</sup> On 19th November when the court was in Aquitaine at the villa Caduppa, not far from Tours, Judith requested a diploma on behalf of abbot Theoto of Marmoutier.<sup>66</sup> This was the confirmation of a donation by Oda, widow of duke Edo, of a villa at Chambou in Blois. The income from the villa was to be used for the community's clothing. Marmoutier was also dedicated to St Martin but overshadowed by its richer and more influential neighbour across the Loire. Theoto was now chancellor. What had happened to Fridugis? Levillain suggested that Fridugis had in fact favoured Pippin of Aquitaine in the crisis of 830 and had been replaced by Theoto as abbot of St Martin's as early as

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until 832, when the notary Theoto succeeded him as chancellor; Oexle, *Forschungen*, as note 50.

<sup>65</sup> *AB*, an 832, p. 26; Thegan, cap 41, p. 226.

<sup>66</sup> Sickel, L306, p. 178.

831.<sup>67</sup> Fridugis' subscription to diplomas ceases after February 832. Oexle has emphasized that there is no other evidence for Fridugis' disloyalty; we also know from a diploma issued on 14th November 832, when the court was at Tours, that Fridugis was still abbot.<sup>68</sup> Fridugis was not young in 832 and his retirement from court may have been due to illness - he died within the next two years. What is clear however is that Louis the Pious could not afford any ambivalent political loyalty from his chancellor or the abbots of either of these communities in 832. This diploma for Theoto and Marmoutier demonstrates Judith's responsiveness to the changing political currents around her in the palace. Fridugis had left the court and so she established a connection with his successor.

The last of the four diplomas was issued at Verneuil on 31st January as the court moved from Neustria towards Aachen.<sup>69</sup> Judith acted as patron on behalf of Hildefrid, a layman. Louis granted Hildefrid the *villae* of Isernam and Thorensel as a benefice which had previously been held by his father Liutfred. These lands were the property of the monastery of Renaix in Brabant and the benefice conditional on the payment of a yearly rent to the monks. Hildefrid is a shadowy figure in contrast to Adalhard, Fridugis and Theoto who were all high profile *palatini* and abbots of important houses. This diploma offers no visible threads that tie Hildefrid to Judith and the court. Yet it signifies how Judith's patronage extended beyond the immediate circle of the palace. Hildefrid stands for the *proceres* beyond the royal household and the court, those leading men, for the most part anonymous, who attended the general assemblies and on whose shoulders the routine of Carolingian administration depended.

These four diplomas map out Judith's continuing formal exercise of influence in the royal household after her reinstatement as queen. Yet even 'dry' official documents can reveal

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<sup>67</sup> Levillain, p. XLV f.

<sup>68</sup> Oexle, see above note 64; Sickel, L305, p. 178

<sup>69</sup> Sickel, L 311, p. 180.



underlying personal and more informal political relationships and contacts. The sudden death of Franco, bishop of Le Mans at the beginning of November 832 provided Louis with the opportunity to move a *palatinus* into a key position of authority in Neustria. Aldric, the emperor's chaplain, had grown up at court, learning about the politics of the Carolingian family and the culture of the palace at first hand. He also had much in common with Judith. Aldric was an easterner like the empress: his father was Saxon and his mother was Alemanian-Bavarian. But his biographer also tells us for good measure that Aldric he was himself a member of the *stirps regia*. At the age of twelve he had been sent to join the *scola* at Charlemagne's palace and he was probably at Aachen when the old emperor died two years later in 814. This suggests that Aldric, at fourteen not yet an adult, had in some way shown himself loyal to Louis the Pious on the new emperor's arrival at Aachen when other *palatini* and members of the Carolingian family such as Wala were suspected of treachery. In the event Aldric, like his younger contemporary Drogo, became a monk at Metz where he was tonsured in 821. Louis the Pious had not forgotten him and in July 832 Aldric was called to Aachen to serve as confessor to his kinsman the emperor.<sup>70</sup> The appointment of Aldric to Le Mans then, marked the placing of an insider in a post critical for the political stability of Neustria. Louis and Judith gave their loyal friend every support possible. In a break with custom the court did not return to Francia and the palace of Aachen for the celebration of Christmas, the imperial couple celebrated Christ's birth with Aldric at Le Mans, following his installation as bishop, with eight days of festivities. Whilst the court was at Le Mans, Louis immediately issued diplomas which confirmed the privileges of the see and began a process of restoring church property to the bishopric.<sup>71</sup> This was an investment in Aldric's power base as bishop whilst at the same time removing resources from the hands of more equivocal supporters. The author of the *Gesta Aldrici*, a Le Mans source which glorified Aldric's

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<sup>70</sup> *Gesta Aldrici*, ed. R Charles and L Froger, Mamers, 1889, pp. 5-10 ; Le Maître, 'Aldric', pp. 46, 62-3. Aldric had originally intended on a secular career and his biographer suggests that he experienced a vocation to the spiritual life whilst in the palace. It seems just as likely that his change of career was the result of persuasion from the emperor, especially after the rebellion of Bernard in 817, or even sooner.

<sup>71</sup> These diplomas were issued between 29th December 832 and 8th January 833: Sickel, L307, L309, pp. 178-80; Goffart, *Le Mans*, nos. 52 and 53, pp. 260-1, 281-2.



episcopate, emphasised the imperial patronage and closeness to the royal household which had marked Aldric's career at every stage. Judith is mentioned specifically in connection with her support for Aldric's restoration programme for the monastery of St Mary, begun in March 836, one of the principal female houses in the area.<sup>72</sup> Aldric's rebuilding programme in the diocese is also a theme for a poem from the corpus of Le Mans material which celebrates Judith, as '*potens regina*': the poet claims that the empress gave Aldric a jewelled chalice and magnificent vestments, objects symbolic of his status as a priest and the celebration of the eucharist.<sup>73</sup>

The celebrations at Le Mans during the Christmas of 832 are a reminder of the importance Louis the Pious attached to the performance of ritual and its role in underpinning imperial authority. Whilst the political situation deteriorated in the winter of 832-33 as Louis's sons prepared for war we can identify a corresponding move on the part of the emperor to enhance and reinforce royal authority with displays of ritual, particularly those which centred on the imperial couple. The restoration of Judith at Aachen in February 831, the royal hunting parties, and the masterful manipulation of the general assemblies - three were held in 831 - all had their part in the repertoire of imperial display. The emperor also sought more sacred opportunities to underpin his authority in Neustria and Aquitaine. These affirmations of imperial authority involved the joint representation of Louis and Judith as emperor and empress. After leaving bishop Aldric and Le Mans early in January, the emperor and empress moved towards Paris. Sometime between the 8th and 20th January they visited Chelles and it was during their stay that abbess Heilwig began the process of translating the body of the saint-queen Balthild to a new tomb.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> The reference is to the joint support of Louis and Judith but it is significant that she should be identified in this venture, thus *Gesta Aldrici*, p. 69; Le Maitre, 'Aldric', p. 47

<sup>73</sup> MGH, Poetae 2, p. 633.

<sup>74</sup> Simson, II, p. 31; *Translatio Sanctae Balthildis Reginae*, Acta Sanctorum, Januarii, II, pp. 747-9.

Chelles, like St Martin's, Tours which also possessed the body of a great saint, had ancient associations with Frankish kingship. On her retirement to Chelles c.664, queen Balthild had developed the complex of monastic buildings, constructing a new church for the community which she dedicated to the Holy Cross, appropriately it also contained some relics of St Radegund. Balthild died in 670 and was buried in her own church.<sup>75</sup> Early in the ninth century another royal woman, Gisela, sister of Charlemagne and therefore the aunt of Louis the Pious, was appointed abbess. It was 'lady Gisela' who built a new, and presumably bigger, church dedicated, like the imperial chapel at Aachen to the Holy Mother of God. It was to a tomb in Gisela's 'modern' church that Balthild's body was transferred in 833. To dig up Balthild's body, to remove her from the tomb in her own church was an act of audacity, presumption and extraordinary self-confidence on the part of Louis the Pious. The terror and awe of the act, albeit to honour saint Balthild, is described in the *translatio*. After the performance of a great many masses and prayers Balthild's tomb was finally opened, possibly whilst Louis and Judith were still at the monastery. However, the formal liturgical ceremony in which the saint's body was transferred to the new tomb in Gisela's church was performed nearly two months later on the 17th March by Ercanrad, bishop of Paris. Fortunately, saint Balthild signalled her approval of her new resting place in abbess Gisela's church by performing miracles. News of these signs of divine favour were greeted enthusiastically when they reached Louis the Pious and the court at Aachen and the emperor marked the occasion by donating the villa at Coulombs-en-Valois in the county of Melun to the community.<sup>76</sup> Balthild was being re-branded as a royal saint for the Carolingians.

The Chelles account of the *translatio* insisted that the emperor himself had ordered abbess Heilwig to arrange the translation of Balthild's relics. Louis and Judith had an

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<sup>75</sup> For an account of Balthild's career see, Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels', pp. 46-52, 60-72; Ercanrad, Depreux, *Prosopographie*, 85, pp. 185-6.

<sup>76</sup> *Translatio*, p. 748.

interest in Balthild's cult: a larger and more splendid tomb which enabled more pilgrims to get close to the relic spoke of the spiritual authority of Balthild, a royal saint and in that sense a special intercessor in the hierarchy of the court of heaven. Yet Heilwig herself was inevitably an energetic promoter of Balthild's cult as abbess of Balthild's community. Abbess Heilwig had a unique relationship with the royal household because, as the Chelles author emphasized, she was 'the mother of the lady empress'.<sup>77</sup> Chelles, under Gisela's leadership in the early ninth century, had contributed to the formation of Carolingian identity through the writing of an early history of the dynasty, the so-called Metz annals. Under Heilwig's rule it was arguably also becoming a significant centre in the formation of queenship. The visit of the royal household to Chelles in 833 was surely the opportunity for Judith and Heilwig to discuss, or review, the brief account of Pippin's coup in 830 written under Heilwig's direction and celebrating her daughter's triumphant return to the palace and restoration as queen.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps Balthild, whose power-base as queen had been the royal palace, was offered to Judith by Heilwig as a template for her own queenship. Judith may already have seen Chelles as a possible refuge in widowhood.

St Denis was another powerful saint with strong associations with Frankish kingship. At the nearby palace at Verneuil on 20th January, Louis issued a diploma for St Denis which instituted the celebration of royal anniversaries.<sup>79</sup> The monks were to commemorate the birthdays of both the emperor and empress not only with prayers but with special meals.<sup>80</sup> Once again, we note the emphasis of Louis the Pious on himself and Judith as a

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 'venerabilis Abbatissa Hegilwiche genetrix Imperatricis'

<sup>78</sup> See above, Introduction.

<sup>79</sup> Sickel, L 310, p. 180; Bouquet VI, 183, p. 588.

<sup>80</sup> M Rouche, 'Les repas de fête à l'époque carolingienne', in *Manger et boire au Moyen Ages*, ed., D Menjot, Actes du Colloque de Nice (15-17) Octobre 1982), I, Aliments et Société, Nice, pp. 265-96.

couple. Events, however, were to prove that in the months ahead the imperial pair were to need more than the protection that the great and beloved saints of the Merovingian kings, Balthild, Denis, and even Louis's special patron Martin, could offer.

Although they were writing from different, hostile and self-consciously rhetorical perspectives Agobard and Radbert were essentially right about Judith: both were correct in their assessment that Judith was a powerful and influential figure at court after her return to the palace in 830. The dry evidence of the diplomas, in particular her relationship with the new seneschal Adalhard, reveals her activity as a powerful political patron in the royal household. The stage-managed restoration of Judith at Aachen in February 831 which had exonerated her of adultery had also been a declaration of the moral probity and integrity of the court and the regime of Louis the Pious. But the underlying problem of conflict within the royal family itself remained unchanged. With hindsight, the appointment of Charles the Bald as king of Aquitaine seems ill-considered and politically premature. The fact that Judith had become such a prominent associate in the new regime appointed since the emperor's return to power after Pippin's coup in 830 placed her in a dangerous position.



## Chapter 6

### **Adulterous queen and emasculated king: Judith, Louis the Pious and the rebellion of 833**

At Rotfeld in Alsace during the last days of June 833, Louis the Pious faced armed rebellion by his sons. This was an alarming prospect for Judith as for the second time in three years she was exposed to the open hostility of her adult stepsons. In 830 Louis the Pious had been surprised by events: leaving Judith alone in the palace at Aachen he had created the conditions in which she could be accused of adultery with the chamberlain. The situation in 833 was very different. The confrontation at Rotfeld came after many months of escalating hostilities. The major narrative sources report the confrontation as a sudden betrayal of the emperor by faithless vassals; Rotfeld was the 'field of lies' where men were forsworn. But the apparent ease with which Lothar was able to overwhelm his father probably owed little to the innate venality and treachery of the Frankish aristocracy. With hindsight it was surely more acceptable for pro-Louis sources to attribute the capture of the emperor at Rotfeld to the wickedness of his opponents rather than to the emperor's political misjudgement. In all likelihood Louis may have been able to muster only a small force to oppose his sons and the Frankish aristocracy reluctant to fight for an uncertain outcome.<sup>1</sup> The emperor stood his ground for as long as he could and when, after a week of negotiations, Louis the Pious surrendered to his sons it was on certain conditions: one such condition was a guarantee from Lothar concerning Judith and Charles the Bald. In the judgement of Louis the Pious they needed to be protected and a sticking point in the negotiations at Rotfeld may have been discussion concerning their status. The emperor obtained an explicit oath from Lothar and his brothers that Judith would not

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<sup>1</sup> Thegan, cap. 42, pp. 228-230; Astron, cap. 48, pp. 474-76; *AB*, an 833, pp. 8-10. On Rotfeld see J L Nelson, 'The last years of Louis the Pious' in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 147-160 and more recently 'Violence in the Carolingian world and the ritualization of ninth-century warfare', in *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*, ed. G Halsall, Woodbridge, (1998) pp. 90-107, at 97 where she makes the point that violent conflict had been a possible outcome during the showdown between the armies.

be killed or harmed in any way.<sup>2</sup> Another safeguard negotiated by the emperor, possibly at Judith's urging, was that his wife should be placed under the protection of the young Louis, whose wife, queen Emma, was Judith's sister. Although there is no evidence, it is possible that Emma was present at Rotfeld participating in background negotiations to assure Judith's safety. We can't know what actually took place but the Astronomer provides interesting details in his account of the surrender of Louis the Pious and Judith: when Louis' sons rode up to meet him their father cautioned them 'as they were jumping down from their horses' to hold to the earlier promises they had made concerning himself, Judith and Charles. When the emperor received the assurance he was looking for, he kissed his sons and was led away to their camp.<sup>3</sup> The kiss of peace offered by the emperor only served by contrast to underline for the Astronomer the Judas-like betrayal by the emperor's sons. It is the Astronomer who gives us the only glimpse of Judith at Rotfeld, confirming that the emperor's wife was indeed led away to the tent of Louis the German.<sup>4</sup> In this detailed account of events at Rotfeld the Astronomer, and indeed Thegan, emphasised the emperor's distrust of Lothar and awareness that his second family had reason to fear the sons of his first marriage but less Louis the German than the others. Judith knew what she could expect. During the coup in 830, Pippin's soldiers had taken her from the safety of the church at Saint Mary, Laon, and had threatened to kill her unless she complied with their demands. Fear of similar treatment and violence at the hands of Lothar was therefore well-founded. The oath extracted by the emperor from Lothar not to harm Judith suggests that he thought so too. A problem for Judith was that from the perspective of Lothar and his supporters she was not the honoured wife of the emperor but a perjured adulteress. Judith and Louis the Pious may have reasoned that the camp of Louis the German offered her the best prospect of safety. In the event

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<sup>2</sup> *'Iam tunc separatam habebant uxorem suam ab eo, cum iuramento confirmantes, ut nec ad mortem nec ad debilitacionem eam habere desiderarent'*, Thegan, cap. 42, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> *'Quibus altrinsecus sibimet occurrentibus, imperator filios ammonuit equis desilientes et sibi occurrentes, ut promissionis sue memores tam sibi quam filio et uxori inlibata que olim promiserant conservarent. Quos congrue respondentes osculatus et ad castra illorum est prosecutus'*. Astron, cap. 48, p. 478.

<sup>4</sup> *'Quo pervenienti uxor subducitur et ad Hludowici tabernacula convertitur'*, *ibid.*

Louis the German was unable to retain responsibility for Judith, who remained under his protection only briefly. Lothar intervened and took charge of Judith himself: removed from Rotfeld, she spent the next ten months as Lothar's prisoner at Tortona in north western Italy some thirty kilometres from Pavia.

The choice of Tortona for Judith's prison confirms Lothar's ultimate control of events at Rotfeld. His actions towards his father, brother and stepmother also suggest that he had reflected on Pippin's experience in 830. Lothar was not going to allow Louis the Pious and his wife the opportunity for a private talk, as had happened at Compiègne three years earlier, to determine their next move. A considerable distance was placed between Louis the Pious and Judith. Not only did Tortona lie far away from Francia - Italy had never been a regular part of the imperial itinerary and Louis the Pious never visited Italy as emperor - but placed Judith where she would be unable to influence events or organize resistance from prison.<sup>5</sup> San Salvatore, Brescia, as well as being Judith's monastery, would have been too near the route north to Alamannia and the possibility of assistance from Judith's Welf kin. Perhaps, in any case, Judith had little control over her Lombard resources after Lothar's retreat to Italy in 831. Tortona was a *civitas*, and there is no hint in any source to suggest that Judith was imprisoned in a monastery rather than a fortress. The Astronomer describes Judith as being sent into exile.<sup>6</sup> Judith's experience in 830 as the prisoner of Pippin had been very different. Pippin had placed his stepmother at Radegund's convent of the Holy Cross where, according to a Chelles source, she had apparently been able to win the admiration of the community for her devotion to prayer and learning. What little evidence we have concerning her time in Italy suggests that it was not spent in a learned and congenial environment. Walahfrid's poem written in praise of Ruadbern, after Ruadbern had allegedly played a heroic military role in Judith's eventual rescue from prison in 834, describes her languishing in misery in a barbarous prison oppressed by fear. The impression that Judith had indeed experienced hardship

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<sup>5</sup> In 816 the pope had come to Francia to crown Louis and Irmengard, see above chapter 1.

<sup>6</sup> '*Uxor patris a Hludouuico rege recepta, exilio iterum deportatur in civitatem Italiae Tartona*', Astron., cap. 48, p. 478; Thegan, cap. 42, p. 230; Nithard, I, cap. 4, p. 16; Andrea of Bergamo, *Historia*, ed. O Holder Egger, MGH SRL, cap. 6, p. 225.



and suffering, possibly more psychological than physical, is also suggested in one of Walahfrid's more oblique and obscure poems which was written after the restoration of the emperor and empress and dedicated to Judith herself. In a poetic account of a strange and puzzling dream Walahfrid reassured his patron that she had been the innocent victim of wrong-doing and the suffering inflicted on her had been wholly undeserved.<sup>7</sup> It was possibly during her time at Tortona that Judith, or a noble female companion, asked a palace chaplain, Prudentius, to assemble a treatise on the psalms as spiritual consolation.<sup>8</sup> In 829 Walahfrid had extolled Judith's learning in *De Imagine Tetrici*, but Judith's imprisonment in Tortona, where unlike the Holy Cross at Poitiers there was no opportunity for study and reflection, provided him with no such opportunity.<sup>9</sup>

Judith was separated from her husband the emperor and from both of her children. Initially, Charles the Bald and his father were kept together, held under conditions of what Nithard described as *magna custodia* or strict custody in contrast to the *libera custodia*, which probably meant something more like conditions of house arrest, in which Louis had been placed during the 830 coup.<sup>10</sup> The ten-year-old was eventually dispatched to the monastery of Prüm, but, as the Astronomer comments significantly, 'not tonsured',<sup>11</sup> a remark which may indicate that, in 833, far from being out of the

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<sup>7</sup> MGH Poetae 2, no 24, pp. 379-80; Dutton, *Dreaming*, pp. 104-107.

<sup>8</sup> 'cum quedam nobilis matrona in civitatibus vel oppidis a pluribus oppressa atque ex accidentibus variis tribulationibus, ut plerique noverunt, adesset angustiatam nimisque tediis afflicta, direxit ad me, rogans obnix, ut aliquid ex laude psalmorum ad consolationem compassionis suae brevissimus scriiptarem versiculis.' Epp 5, 17, pp. 323-4, PL, vol 115, cols 1449-52. Dümmler had no doubt that the *nobilis matrona* addressed by Prudentius was the empress, *Geschichte*, I, p. 96; Depreux also suggests Judith as the recipient of this text, *Prosopographie*, no 214, pp. 349-50 with note 11.

<sup>9</sup> P. Godman, *Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance*, London, (1985) no 30, pp. 216-221; v.11 at p. 216.

<sup>10</sup> 'libera custodia', I, cap. 3, p. 10; 'magna custodia', I, cap.4, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> Astron, cap. 48, p 480.



question this course of action was being considered in Lothar's camp.<sup>12</sup> The adult Charles the Bald was to look back on his experience in 833 with anger. Over thirty years later in 867 in a letter to Pope Nicholas I he expressed outrage at the treatment both he and his parents received at the hands of his eldest brother.<sup>13</sup> But what happened to Judith and Louis' eldest child Gisela? Her whereabouts in 833 can only be guessed at but if she accompanied her mother Judith to Rotfeld then perhaps she was allowed to remain in the entourage of her aunt, queen Emma. After Rotfeld Lothar dispersed his father's second family. The nuclear imperial family which consisted of Judith, Charles and Gisela, promoted by Louis the Pious in the 820s was effectively set aside. Lothar, eldest son of the empress Irmengard, and under the terms of the 817 *divisio* co-emperor with his father, reasserted his claims.

In October, at Compiègne, Louis the Pious stood accused by Lothar and his supporters of harsh and unjust rule. The *Relatio* of Lothar's bishops set out a formal case against Louis' regime. Judith is not named in these depositions and only referred to indirectly: the emperor was charged with allowing women to clear themselves of accusations by committing perjury.<sup>14</sup> This is probably a reference to Judith's compurgation at Aachen in February 831. The burden of Lothar's complaint was not against her. In November, at St Medard, Soissons, the events set in motion at Rotfeld reached a climax. On the judgement of the bishops who supported Lothar, the emperor was ritually deprived of his imperial and temporal authority. In an act of submission Louis the Pious placed his sword belt, the *cingulum militiae*, the symbol of his manhood and kingship, on the tomb of St Sebastian. He also divested himself

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<sup>12</sup> See Nithard I, cap. 3, p. 10, where in discussing the coup of 830 he implies that Lothar *had* intended to persuade Charles to take up a monastic career. Lauer, however, comments that Nithard may be confused on this point yet considering Nithard was writing for Charles the Bald this may reflect Charles' own view of his experience during the rebellion, *ibid*, n. 8, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> 'uxore ipsius in Italiam, Tardonem scilicet civitatem, adducta, custodia mancipavere, nos quoque, non adhuc decennem, quasi multorum criminum obnoxium, pari custodia Prumia monasterio mancipandum delegavere', Bouquet, vol 7, p. 557. See also the comments of J Nelson in *Charles the Bald*, pp. 91-2.

<sup>14</sup> 'Sed in mulierum purgatione, in iniustis iudiciis, in falsis testimoniis atque periuriis quae eo permittente coram se perpetrata sunt, quantum Deum offenderit, ipse novit.' *Relatio Compiendis*, MGH Capit. II, no. 197, pp. 51-55; cap. 5, p.54.

of his royal garb and received the habit of a monk and penitent thus casting off the outward appearance of the secular world. Both the *Relatio* of Lothar's bishops and Agobard's own account of these events insisted that Louis the Pious had acted of his own free will.<sup>15</sup> Yet the penance at St Medard Soissons had, in reality, been imposed on Louis the Pious; he had been forced to renounce his identity as a man by setting aside his sword, royal clothes and, most significant of all, Judith, his wife.<sup>16</sup> The *cingulum militiae* and marital sex, were inextricably linked, marriage and arms were the hallmarks of the duties of secular life for the male aristocracy. The exile of Judith to Italy had ended marital relations, the laying down of the military belt completed the secular emasculation of Louis the Pious. All that was left to him was to reclothe himself in the monastic habit, symbolic both of sexual continence and the disavowal of military violence.

How were such acts to be justified? A singular feature of the rebellion of 833 is the extent to which Lothar's supporters defended their actions by means of the written word. Lothar's actions at Rotfeld and Soissons were presented not in terms of an opportunistic palace coup or filial rebellion but as a considered attempt to wrest power permanently and legitimately from his father the emperor. Lothar had brought the pope with him from Italy and Radbert describes the negotiations at Rotfeld in detail, including the presentation of *Capitula* which set out grievances against the emperor.<sup>17</sup> Texts were produced to explain, excoriate, justify or influence political

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. 8, p.55; *Cartula de Ludowici imperatoris poenitentia*, Opera Omnia, 2, pp. 323-4, at p. 324.

<sup>16</sup> K. Leyser, 'Early Medieval Canon Law and the Beginnings of Knighthood', in *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein*, eds., Lutz Fenske, Werner Rosener and Thomas Zotz, Sigmaringen (1984), pp 549-66; S. Airlie, 'The anxiety of sanctity: Gerald of Aurillac and his maker', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43, (1992), pp 372-95; M de Jong, 'Power and humility in Carolingian society: the public penance of Louis the Pious', *Early Medieval Europe*, I, pp. 29-52, especially at p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> Radbert's *capitula* are now lost but are referred to in the *Epitaphium*, see D. Ganz, *Corbie in the Carolingian Renaissance*, *Beihefte der Francia* vol 20, Sigmaringen (1990) pp. 29-30; J. Fried, 'Ludwig der Fromme, das Papsttum und die fränkische Kirche', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 231-274, at pp. 266-72.

and theological opinion and actions both during the crisis and after the restoration of the emperor in 834.<sup>18</sup> Judith is at the heart of two texts, both produced during the summer and autumn of 833 to justify and defend the capture and deposition of Louis the Pious: Agobard's *Libri Apologetici* fashioned Judith into a deadly weapon with which to attack the emperor. The polemical onslaught on the kingship of Louis the Pious reveals much of Agobard's thinking about queenship. In the *LA* we see the imperial marriage, specifically the sexual relationship between husband and wife, elevated as the source of harmony within the royal household. Adultery was, therefore, the source of corruption and conflict. Agobard identified the queen's exercise of authority, her chastity (*honestas*) and appropriate behaviour in the royal household as a prerequisite for the peaceful and orderly governance of the *regnum* itself. These are ideas which reflect Adalhard's view of the queen's responsibilities in *De Ordine Palatii* a decade or more earlier. This means that Agobard's short polemical texts have a significance that goes beyond the political events of 833. Agobard was contributing to the contemporary discourse around the development of Carolingian queenship.

Agobard's *Libri Apologetici* (hence *LA*) are unique sources both for the crisis of 833 and the study of Judith's career. First, unlike all other commentators on these events Agobard wrote without the benefit of hindsight. He did not know that opposition to Louis the Pious would fail, and fail rather quickly. Secondly, we can capture the moments in the crisis when they were written. The *LA* are separate, though closely related, texts: *pièces d'occasion*, which can be placed within precise, political contexts during the summer and autumn of 833. *LA I* was clearly intended to rouse support for opposition to the emperor and was written before the confrontation at Rotfeld and the capture of the imperial couple. It was Agobard's declared hope that the conflict could be resolved without bloodshed.<sup>19</sup> *LA II* was written at least four months later and is a justification of the actions of Lothar and his supporters in deposing the

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<sup>18</sup> See Simson, *Jahrbücher* II, pp. 31-125 for an indication of the abundance of evidence for the events of 833-34.

<sup>19</sup> 'absque sanguinis effusione...', *LA I*, cap. VI, p. 312.



emperor. The emphasis on the redemption of Louis the Pious through penance links *LA II* closely to the penance performed at Soissons in October.

In the MGH edition George Waitz gave Agobard's texts the title 'The two books for the sons of Louis the Pious against Judith'. He followed Baluze who had used the title 'Two books against Louis the Pious'.<sup>20</sup> The *LA* are certainly about Judith, although Agobard never refers to her by name. The positive association of the biblical heroine, a model of the triumph of justice over tyranny, militated against allowing the empress her name.<sup>21</sup> Waitz's labelling of the texts is misleading however; Agobard was not writing 'against Judith': his polemics were directed ultimately at Louis the Pious and what Agobard saw as the failure of his regime. Judith represents the occasion of Louis' sin; she is not Agobard's end, only his means. It is Agobard's use of Judith in his argument against Louis the Pious which make the *LA* such rich and complex texts for the study of Judith and the representation of queenship itself. In both texts Agobard constructed Judith to suit his changing rhetorical needs. In *LA I* Agobard attacked Judith as the empress, mistress of the royal household, an individual known to his audience: she is the *auctrix malorum*, authoress of evils, whose deviant behaviour in the exercise of her responsibilities in the royal household is exposed.<sup>22</sup> Five months later in *LA II*, Agobard moved from the specific to the general. Judith became a type of the evil woman. Both texts deployed a wide repertoire of anti-feminine metaphors and rhetoric yet Agobard's criticism of Judith amounted to more than the usual banalities of ecclesiastical misogyny. In the *LA* we discover Agobard theorising about the queen and the roles she was meant to occupy in the royal household and *regnum*.

But what did Agobard actually know of Judith? What had she done to provoke the ire of the archbishop of Lyons? Egon Boshof explained Agobard's motivation in the attack on Judith in both personal and ideological terms: Agobard opposed Judith

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<sup>20</sup> MGH SS 15, 1, pp. 275-276.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the significance of Judith's name see above, Introduction.

<sup>22</sup> *LA I*, cap. 2, p. 309.



because she was the enemy of imperial unity. In Boshof's eyes Judith and Agobard were thus implacable enemies.<sup>23</sup> Yet if the archbishop was motivated in the *LA* by a personal hatred of Judith it is hard to uncover the roots of this animosity. Agobard had not been afraid to criticize the royal household and the emperor but when we look at his earlier writings from the 820s there is no complaint or criticism of the empress. Indeed Agobard does not mention any meeting or contact with Judith although he would presumably have seen her when he visited the palace as we know he did from time to time in the 820s. There is nothing to suggest that in 833 the archbishop of Lyons and the empress had shared a relationship based on patronage, gift-giving and social contact which existed, for example, between Judith and archbishop Ebo of Rheims or Einhard. The key difference was that both Ebo and Einhard frequented the court: Einhard even had a house at Aachen, whereas Agobard was no *palatinus*. Agobard had been to the palace on at least two separate occasions in the 820s expressly to petition the emperor about the affairs of his archdiocese; his particular concern was what he saw as the emperor's increasing favour towards the Jewish community in Lyons and the privileges they enjoyed at Aachen itself. In 823 he had had meetings with three of the court elite, the brothers Wala and Adalhard who were the emperor's cousins, and Helisachar the archchancellor who agreed to assist Agobard in arranging an audience with the emperor. Agobard must have felt that he was at last gaining an entry into the influential circle of patronage around the emperor but he was to be disappointed. When Agobard was shown into the presence of Louis the Pious he found himself dismissed almost immediately which led him to believe that he had been traduced by his intermediaries.<sup>24</sup> Back home in Lyons, he wrote to Count Matfred complaining about what he saw as the corrupt channels of access to the emperor at court.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that Agobard was an outsider: unable to operate the levers of patronage at court. Unhappy and uncomfortable with the style and atmosphere of the royal household, perhaps Agobard criticised the culture of the

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<sup>23</sup> *Erzbischof Agobard*, pp. 236-7.

<sup>24</sup> *De Baptismo Iudaicorum mancipiorum*, Opera Omnia, 6, pp. 115-117, at 115.

<sup>25</sup> *De iniusticiis (Ad Matfredum)*, Opera Omnia, 10, pp. 101-03; see with the comments by Airlie on Agobard as an outsider, 'Bonds', p. 194-95 with note 28.

court itself. Agobard wrote to the emperor to complain that ladies in the imperial household, some of whom were said to be members of the royal family, had made lavish gifts of clothes to the wives of Jews there.<sup>26</sup> Some historians have read a great deal into Agobard's gripe and attributed the concessions to the Jews at Aachen and Lyons to Judith's patronage because both groups were implicated in luxury traffic. Such allegations reveal that negative cultural and gender stereotypes flourish together in the twentieth century as in the ninth.<sup>27</sup> Jewish merchants were certainly involved in the luxury trade that serviced the imperial court but this activity was not exclusive to Jews. As for the magnificence of the palace, that was part of the representation of Carolingian power and, according to the *DOP*, was specifically the queen's responsibility, with the assistance of the chamberlain.<sup>28</sup> In looking back at Agobard's concerns in his writings from the 820s one gains the impression that he was generally hostile to the court of Louis the Pious and how business was conducted there. Agobard faced the reality that getting on at court was necessary but he found it a disagreeable and difficult activity. The royal household was of course the very environment in which Judith's authority was grounded and the milieu in which she negotiated her influence as a patron. One can see that for Agobard it might be only a short step to make an attack on the regime of Louis the Pious through an attack on Judith. The empress could represent all that was wrong and corrupt in the rule of the emperor in both court and kingdom: *auctrix malorum* and *tocius causa mali*.<sup>29</sup>

Before turning to examine the texts in detail it is worth considering who the *LA* were written for and why the demonisation of Judith might prove effective with this audience. *LA I* was written before the confrontation at Rotfeld which suggests that it was intended to influence a learned aristocratic audience to make common cause with Lothar. But just who were these men? The most likely candidates were *procures* who

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<sup>26</sup> *De insolentia Judaeorum*, Opera Omnia, 11, pp. 191-95, 194.

<sup>27</sup> Thus Schubert, noted by Boshof, *Erzbischof Agobard*, note 17, p. 15; see also with the remarks of Weinrich, *Wala*, p. 58 ; Cabaniss, *Agobard*, p. 47.

<sup>28</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>29</sup> *LA I*, cap 2, p. 309; *LA II*, cap. 2, p. 316.

had allied themselves with Pippin and Lothar in the coup of 830. Two close associates of Lothar since their fall from favour in 828 were Hugh and Matfred, the 'twin' counts who had been Judith's conspicuous guard of honour in Ermold's account of the baptism of the Danes in 826. Matfred had already been identified by Agobard as a sympathetic figure at court in the 820s. The former count of Orleans and the archbishop of Lyons shared intellectual interests: Matfred had requested Jonas of Orleans to prepare a treatise for him on the obligations of the secular life.<sup>30</sup> Hugh, Lothar's father-in-law, Matfred, and others who had made common cause with Pippin and Lothar in 830 had seen just how effective an accusation of adultery against the empress could be as device to launch an assault on the regime of Louis the Pious. So Agobard, in working through a more theologically reasoned defence of the events of 833 which culminated in the capture and formal deposition of the emperor reflected existing preoccupations amongst some of his target audience. Laymen such as Matfred, and indeed Pippin, were already familiar with the contemporary discourse concerning the obligations of Christian marriage, ideas about the moral probity of the palace and the behaviour of the queen and how they could be used to political advantage. The protagonists in the failed coup of 830 had used allegations of sexual crime in the palace as a political lever. In the 820s, when Agobard had criticised the culture of the court where he had failed to gain patronage, his complaints had fallen on stony ground. In 833, Agobard found himself articulating a message that struck a chord with his audience. Politically and intellectually, Agobard was an outsider no more. Lothar, and those around him such as Hugh and Matfred, who wanted a change of regime, could appreciate a justification of their actions which was centred on a moral assault on the court, where they were excluded from patronage. Indeed, the virulence of Agobard's attack on Judith suggests that the 'dishonoured' may have seen her, or have come to see her, as in some way responsible for their exclusion.

Agobard's political criticism of Louis the Pious in 833 stemmed from his partisan position in Lothar's camp. He opposed what he depicted as the emperor's arbitrary

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<sup>30</sup> See above, chapter 4.



treatment of his three eldest sons in the early 830s.<sup>31</sup> Louis had re-allocated their shares of the *regnum*, excluded them from counsel and raised armies against his own kin and other Christians. But these concerns, which are echoed closely in the *Relatio* of the bishops at Compiègne in 833, were not Agobard's first line of attack in these texts.<sup>32</sup> Agobard did not begin *LA I* with a theological defence of resistance to Louis the Pious: instead he reminded his target audience of the events of 830, and offered a vindication of the failed attempt to exclude Judith from the palace. His moral outrage was directed in the first place not against the emperor but against Judith, the woman who had hardened the heart of the emperor against the sons of Irmengard.

The text of *LA I* opens with a universal address. Agobard called on 'all peoples' to hear his complaint and that the sun, earth, sky and sea might know the righteous indignation of the emperor's sons and their just desires to rid the paternal palace of filthy factions. But then Agobard moved swiftly from a global audience to scrutinize what was most personal and intimate, namely the marriage bed of husband and wife, and the sexual relationship between Louis the Pious and Judith.

'In the beginning the said lord emperor was at peace and flourishing in the palace whilst he kept his young wife with him with reverence and paid to her that debt which according to the Apostle is due to a wife. But as the days went by he began at first to become tepid and then to freeze and on this account the woman fell into lasciviousness: as what was licit ceased she turned ever more to that which was illicit. At first only a few people knew, then many, until at last it was common knowledge amongst the multitude in the palace, in the kingdom, indeed to the ends of the earth. Lesser folk laughed at this, great ones grieved, but all good men judged the situation to be intolerable. The sons of the emperor were roused by reasonable zeal, seeing the staining of the paternal bed, the pollution of the palace, the confusion of

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<sup>31</sup> Agobard's political position *circa* 829 is stated in his so-called '*flebilis epistola*', but more accurately titled letter *De divisione imperii*, Opera Omnia, 16, pp. 245-50.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. the complaint against Louis the Pious in the *Relatio*, pp. 366-9.



the kingdom and the slur on the name of the Franks which had once shone out in the whole world. So coming together and being of one pious mind in the purging of wickedness they restored to their father quiet and a little dignity. Some were apprehended, others escaped but the authoress of evils was excluded from the palace and held in custody having exchanged the clothes of royalty for the habit of a nun.<sup>33</sup>

This extraordinary passage has not been analysed in any detail by historians yet its allegations are of immense significance. Agobard was suggesting that by 830 the emperor had ceased to have sexual intercourse with his wife and, indeed, had become impotent. The reticence of scholars may reflect an unease with Agobard's subject matter.<sup>34</sup> But issues of sexuality, gender and the experiential aspects of marriage are now recognised as legitimate concerns of historians and central to political as well as cultural history.<sup>35</sup> The reluctance of some historians to discuss this passage has meant that an issue which lies at the centre of Agobard's criticism of Louis has been ignored or marginalised. Agobard's interest in the sex life of the emperor cannot be attributed

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<sup>33</sup> *'Igitur cum praedictus domnus et imperator quietus esset in domo et florens in palacio suo, cum adhuc iuvenem coniugem sub sui reverencia custodiret et secundum apostolum uxorium debitum illi persolveret, in processu vero dierum cum cepissent haec primum tepescere, deinde frigescere, ac per hoc et mulier resolvi in lasciviam, cessantibus licitis, conversa, immo adversa ad inlicita, adscivit sibimet aptas personas ad perpetranda turpia, et primum latenter, deinde impudenter. Cognoverunt autem hoc inicio pauci, deinde plures, ad postremum autem multitudo palatii et regni, ac finium terrae; quam rem inridebant minores, dolebant maiores, omnes autem clari viri intolerandum iudicantes. Concitati itaque sunt spiritus filiorum imperatoris rationabili zelo, videntes maculatum startum paternum, sordidatum palatium, confusum regnum, et obscuratum nomen Francorum, quod hactenus clarum fuerat in toto orbe. Et surgentes singuli uno et pio consensu in emundatione scelerum, convenerunt simul, et aliis comprehensis, aliis effugatis, autrice vero malorum exclusa a palatio, inclusa custodie, mutato habitu regali, induto habitu sanctimoniali, reddiderunt patrem quieti et aliquantule honestati'. LA I, cap. II, p. 309-310.*

<sup>34</sup> A Cabaniss *Agobard of Lyons: churchman and critic*, Syracuse (1954) discusses *LA I* but does not analyse this passage, pp. 79-90; neither does J M Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, (1984) p.232 ff, where Agobard is seen essentially as a radical reformer; Boshof, *Erzbischof Agobard*, offers a detailed analysis of Agobard's thought and the influence of Augustine, pp. 216-53, but does not address the central issues of sexual politics. Now see Ward, 'Agobard and Paschasius', pp. 20-21.

<sup>35</sup> See for example Airlie's discussion of the politics of the Lotharingian divorce case, 'Private bodies and the body politic', pp. 3-38.

to mere prurience. Like other ninth century intellectuals, Agobard made use of marital and sexual imagery in his writings. For example in a letter to his priests, Agobard warned them against social contact with Jews because this would defile them as fitting brides for Christ, and the marriage bed would be polluted.<sup>36</sup> Sexual imagery and marital symbolism, drawn from the Song of Songs and other Old Testament sources was not unusual in the work of the Frankish clergy and was standard moralising. In the *LA*, by citing the Pauline teaching on marriage, of the married couple as 'one flesh' and the marriage debt as divinely approved, Agobard analysed the alleged facts concerning the marriage of the emperor and empress to use as political polemic against the court. Agobard chose to make a connection between Louis' failure to pay Judith the Pauline marriage debt, his implied impotence, Judith's ensuing adultery and rebellion. Sexual dysfunction within the royal marriage rhetorically stood for, and literally caused, political dysfunction in the empire itself. The emperor's inability to fulfil his marital obligations towards Judith, pointedly described here as 'young', had unleashed sexual sin and chaos. So Agobard's criticism of Judith's unchastity was double-edged: it was an attack on Judith but it was also a savage indictment of the emperor's manhood, of his failure to live up to the ideal of the lay aristocrat and, by implication, of his kingship, for Judith's alleged adultery was, ultimately, the responsibility of her husband. Whilst Judith is condemned as a woman in the *LA*, Louis the Pious is also found wanting as a man. In the *LA* the adulterous queen, a familiar biblical model of disharmony, has as her consort the much more troubling and ambivalent figure of the emasculated and impotent king. The frail human body of Louis the Pious himself, no less than that of Judith an adulterous wife, was placed at the centre of Agobard's discourse. Louis and Judith were found wanting by Agobard in the discharge of their reciprocal responsibilities within the royal household; both were unfit to hold office.

Agobard's claim about Louis' conjugal failure is not corroborated in any other source. Radbert, for example, does not repeat the charge twenty years later in the *Epitaphium*. Yet, there is no reason to suppose that Agobard was fabricating this

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<sup>36</sup> *De cavendo convictu et societate Iudaica*, Opera Omnia, 14, pp. 231-234, at p. 231.

extraordinary allegation while knowing it to be untrue. In 833 Agobard may only have been putting into the written word what was – as he himself claims – widely received gossip about the emperor's marriage. Agobard was certainly not a *palatinus*, yet as archbishop of Lyons news of the royal household court would surely have reached him. Everything that is known of life at court, especially from Einhard's vignettes, suggests that it was an environment where the royal household lived a public domestic life.<sup>37</sup> The nature of the accusations against both Louis and Judith demonstrates that this was a world, *pace* Duby, without privacy, where for the emperor and empress, the private was public.<sup>38</sup> It is entirely possible that if the emperor and empress no longer enjoyed sexual relations, this would be common knowledge at court and far beyond. The problem for the emperor was that even if Agobard was merely articulating scurrilous rumour, it was plausible enough. And Agobard, who was no admirer of the court and the way business was conducted there, may have been psychologically predisposed to believe what he had heard, or indeed what Lothar told him, about Judith. At the most obvious level Agobard was drawing attention to the fact that Louis the Pious was getting older and was married to a much younger wife. Unfortunately for the emperor the facts of his family life did him no favours. In the summer of 833 Louis and Judith had been married for over fourteen years but had only two children. The perinatal mortality rate was high in the early middle ages even amongst royal children and Judith may have experienced miscarriages and stillbirths. Nevertheless, it may be significant that there are no obits or memorials for any children of Louis and Judith who died in infancy.<sup>39</sup> Charles the Bald, born a decade earlier in June 823, may have been Judith's last pregnancy.

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<sup>37</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap 24, p. 29, where Charlemagne hears court cases whilst dressing; Airlie, 'Bonds', pp. 195-6; J L Nelson, 'Monks, secular men and masculinity, c.900', in *Masculinity in medieval Europe*, ed., D Hadley, London, (1999), pp. 121-142.

<sup>38</sup> G Duby, *A History of Private Life: the middle ages*, Vol II, transl A Goldhammer, Camb. (Mass.), 1988, pp. 3-31, at pp. 29 and 31 on the privacy of the marriage chamber.

<sup>39</sup> Contrast for example Gisela and Eberhard's children who died in infancy : Werner, 'Die Nachkommen', p. 42, and Charlemagne's: epitaphs on his daughters were written by Paul the Deacon, MGH Poetae 1, pp. 59-60.



There is another point. The emperor's marriage was vulnerable to scrutiny from churchmen and intellectuals such as Agobard precisely because Louis the Pious and his court had placed much emphasis on the married state. The representation of the court as we encounter it in the work of the poets Ermold and Walahfrid focuses on emperor and empress as a couple. Louis the Pious seems to have allowed himself to be depicted as a purifier of the filth of Charlemagne's court. Charlemagne had continued to father children in his sixties by a series of concubines and had allowed his daughters to fornicate in the palace. Louis, by contrast, appears to have been mindful of the Christian theology of marriage, choosing remarriage over concubinage at the death of Irmengard.<sup>40</sup> The monk Wetti had a vision of Charlemagne in hell where an animal tore at his genitals as a punishment for his sexual sins, and what was said and written at Reichenau in the early 820s was likely to have been known at court.<sup>41</sup> The obligations of the married state were a contemporary theme of ninth century moralistic writing for the secular aristocracy.<sup>42</sup> The emperor was also the promoter of reform in the Frankish church. His reasons were likely to have been political as well as pious. Paradoxically it was this self-conscious piety, or the presentation of such attitudes, that laid Louis and Judith open to the criticisms of Agobard.

The key influences on Agobard's view of marriage in the *LA* were of course St Paul, 'the Apostle', and Augustine whom Michael Wallace-Hadrill described as the 'speciality of Lyons'.<sup>43</sup> The idea of conjugal reciprocity, a thread which runs through and connects both of Agobard's texts, is one that Augustine had developed from the concept of the Pauline 'marriage debt' in *De bono coniugali* and other writings on Christian sexual ethics. Augustine defined three purposes in marriage, namely

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<sup>40</sup> For Charlemagne's marital and sexual history see above, chapter 1.

<sup>41</sup> See above chapter 3, at note 81.

<sup>42</sup> P. Thoubert, 'La théorie du mariage chez les moralistes carolingiens', in *Il Matrimonio nella società altomedievale*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano sull'Alto Medioevo 24, 2 vols., Spoleto (1977) I, pp. 233-285.

<sup>43</sup> See his discussion of the see of Lyons and its libraries, *The Frankish Church*, pp. 358-61.



procreation, mutual fidelity and what he termed the sacrament. This led Augustine to argue, against the Manichees, that sexual relations within marriage constituted a good insofar as the sexual act was directed solely towards procreation and not to the appeasement of concupiscence. Yet because the couple were also bound by mutual fidelity they might not refuse each other. Augustine had argued that the marriage debt could not be renounced unilaterally by one partner.<sup>44</sup> A married person who wished to enter a monastery, for example, and take a vow of celibacy had first to gain the consent of his or her spouse. A wife, as much as a husband, was entitled to the fulfilment of the marriage debt. Agobard is arguing that Judith was entitled to a sex life but only in the interests of procreation and with her husband. There is an echo of this idea, albeit in an entirely different context, in another ninth-century text, the *Manual* of Dhuoda, a Frankish noblewoman. Dhuoda was a wife who endured prolonged separations from her husband, Bernard of Septimania, Judith's alleged lover. In the book of spiritual advice Dhuoda wrote for her son William in 841 she spelt out to him the obligations of the life of the adult lay aristocrat. Marriage and the begetting of children was one such obligation. Did Dhuoda have her own marriage in mind when she urged her son not to forget the kind of service which was performed in the marriage bed? <sup>45</sup>

Agobard's view of marriage with its functional and, up to a point, egalitarian attitude to sexual relations reflected the prevailing negative tradition of the Christian church towards female sexuality. One example is the notion that women are the more lustful sex and sexually insatiable. Carnal knowledge transforms and contaminates women by awakening a voracious sexual appetite which they are incapable of moderating.<sup>46</sup> For Agobard, the expulsion of Judith from the palace in 830 had been all too brief. Judith

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<sup>44</sup> For a summary of Augustine's view on marriage and sexuality, see P Brown, *The Body and Society*, Columbia, (1988), pp. 402-04.

<sup>45</sup> Dhuoda, *Liber Manualis*, ed and trans P Riche, where she chooses the verb 'militare' to describe conjugal obligations, IV, 6, p. 228 see also J L Nelson, 'Les Femmes et l'évangélisation', *Revue du Nord*, 1985, pp. 471-85.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, Walahfrid's remarks on the insatiability of widows, *Visio Wettini*, pp. 62, 66-67.

effected her return 'through carnal blandishments' and was recalled to the palace 'as (maybe) a legitimate wife' (*'tanquam legitima coniunx'*).<sup>47</sup> Agobard understood the restoration of Judith in 831 as the restoration of injustice and wrong-doing, Judith's return marked the growth of her malign influence as she turned Louis against his sons and an even more perverted regime was established. It was against this background that Agobard catalogued the political case against Louis' regime. Louis stood accused of failure to meet his obligations as a Christian ruler. For the first time in the text Louis the Pious moves from a passive to an active role - but whilst he is no longer acted on, his actions are deplored as unholy and unjust. The oaths sworn by the Frankish aristocracy to Charles the Bald at Jouac in 832 are denounced as blasphemous, not only because Agobard thought they were contradictory but also because grown men had been made to swear to a child; Louis had created civil disorder in the *regnum* and the church; instead of waging a just war against barbarous peoples to bring them into the Christian empire he had barbarized Christians.<sup>48</sup> But most seriously of all Louis was accused of waging an unjust war against his own loving sons. Louis, guilty of *negligencia*, had brought his kingdom to the point of collapse and unless God intervened the *regnum* might be lost through invasion, to tyrants or to the Antichrist.<sup>49</sup>

It was on this note of horror that Agobard turned from Louis to Judith. The last chapters of *LA I* focused on her: she moved into the centre of his polemic. Agobard now addressed her behaviour as queen in the palace and found that Judith fell short of an exalted ideal of the queen's role.

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<sup>47</sup> *LA I*, cap. III, p. 316

<sup>48</sup> Oaths at Jouac, *LA II*, cap III, p.311; raising armies against Franks instead of *externae gentes*, and the barbarizing of Christians: *ibid*, pp. 311-12

<sup>49</sup> *LA II*, cap IV, p. 312.



'And there were those who said that the mistress (*domina*) of the senior<sup>50</sup> palace, both openly and secretly sported childishly (*ludat pueriliter*) whilst priests (*de ordine sacerdotali*) looked on and very many of these joined in the games (*conludentibus*). The Apostle has written about the choosing of bishops, saying: let his household be well ordered and his sons subdued with all chastity, because if anyone is not able to rule his own household how will he be able to have the care of the church of God? They ought to have spoken out about the cavorting of the mistress : for if the queen does not know how to govern herself how shall there be the care of the *honestas* of the palace and how shall the governance of the kingdom be properly exercised?'<sup>51</sup>

This is the most obscure passage in *LA I*, the implications of Judith's games or playing with priests, for example, are very difficult to interpret. Yet it also contains significant statements of Agobard's view of queenship: it is here that he introduces the idea of Judith as *domina* and *regina*, that is, a woman with responsibility for a household. But Judith is deficient as *regina* and *domina* not only because she is unchaste but also because she indulges in other deviant behaviours, games with priests, which deprived the palace of *honestas*. Judith's strange childish play, sometimes 'secretly', sometimes 'openly', connects with Agobard's more explicit discussion of Judith's lack of self-rule in the performance of her responsibilities as queen.

What was Judith playing at? The phrase *de ordine sacerdotali* suggests that Agobard is thinking of ordained priests, or even bishops, men set apart . The idea of a woman 'playing' with men who were the ritually pure was, of course, sensational. And it was doubly shocking because the queen herself was meant to be the *honestas domina*. It is

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<sup>50</sup> The use of the word *senior* here I take to be a reference to the palace of Louis the Pious in contrast to the junior imperial status of Lothar.

<sup>51</sup> '*Dicunt etiam aliqui, quod domina palatii senioris, extra illa quae de eius occultis et non occultis dicuntur, ludat pueriliter, spectantibus etiam aliquibus de ordine sacerdotali, et plerisque conludentibus, qui secundum formam quam apostolus scribit de eligendis episcopis, dicens: "Domui sue bene praepositum, filios habentem subditos cum omni castitate; quia si quis domui sue praesse nescit, quomodo Ecclesie Dei diligentiam habebit?" praedicare debuerant domine ludenti: si qua regina semet ipsam regere non novit, quomodo gubernacula regni diligenter exercet?*' *LA I*, cap. V, p. 311, with biblical ref to I Tim. 3:4-5.

impossible to know whether Agobard was alluding here to specific events or persons. There are several possibilities. *Ludere* may imply secular dramatic performances. Allen Cabaniss interpreted this passage as evidence for secular entertainments, possibly some kind of acting, organised by Judith for the celebrations at Christmas 829.<sup>52</sup> Mimetic performance was disapproved of especially for monks and priests both as participants and spectators. We can trace a hostility among churchmen such as Alcuin to mimetic performances in general and, in particular, to what he saw as the powerful and dangerous appeal of play-acting for monks. Alcuin wrote to Adalhard of Corbie of his distress at Angilbert's love of *spectacula* which were prohibited by all sacred scriptures.<sup>53</sup> 'It is better to please God than actors', Alcuin advised a young monk in Italy and urged him to take up *honesta convivia*. Plays and players were incompatible with the pursuit of the *vita honesta*.<sup>54</sup> Agobard may therefore have been arguing that Judith defiled and violated the ritual centre of the empire. However, we need not interpret the possible allusion to acting and performance in this passage so literally. The involvement of priests in these 'games' may point towards a more hostile and pointed attack on the part of Agobard to religious ritual in the palace. One thinks of the baptism of the Danes at Ingelheim in 826 and, perhaps more controversially, Walahfrid's elaborate description of a court procession in *De imagine Tetrici*. However the predominant note in this passage, indeed in the portrayal of Judith throughout *LA I*, is of sexual impropriety. Peter Brown, in his study of sexual renunciation and early Christian mores, described the '*ludus*' in the early empire as a recognised period of sexual pleasure and experimentation, frankly bisexual in nature, enjoyed by young upper-class Roman males in the first century AD. Young men sowed their wild oats before they settled down, entered public life and accepted the social responsibilities of marriage. This was just the kind of lifestyle that St Paul, Agobard's authority in the *LA*, urged Christians to renounce.<sup>55</sup> So Judith's so-called

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<sup>52</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Epistolae*, ed. Dümmler, MGH Epp. 4, ep. 175, p. 290.

<sup>54</sup> Ep. 281, p. 439.

<sup>55</sup> P Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Columbia (1988), pp. 28-29, 51, 438.



play with priests could amount to illicit sexual activity of some kind. The other element in Judith's play is that it is also described as done childishly, or boyishly ('*pueriliter*'). This was another kind of attack on her rule of the royal household because the point about children, of course, is that they are incapable of adult responsibility. A child cannot hold high office or political authority. And Agobard had denounced the oaths sworn in 832 to the nine-year-old Charles as 'blasphemous' partly on the grounds that they had been made to a child. Agobard thus infantilised Judith to mount a further argument against her fitness and moral capacity to be queen. Yet to criticise a queen explicitly for her lack of self-governance, as Agobard did later in the same passage, was in itself significant because this attribute is normally associated with the exercise of male rulership.<sup>56</sup>

This is also the passage in *LA I* which links the rule of the palace directly with the rule of the kingdom. What made Agobard's line of thought distinctive was the fact that it did not constitute an attack on the queen's authority within the palace but on Judith's fitness for the exalted role of queen. Implicit in his argument in the *LA* is a separation between the person of Judith and the office of queen. Agobard made Judith's *honestas* - her chastity and moral probity - the *palladium* of the *regnum*. This was an idea linked inextricably by Agobard to what he saw as the queen's function in royal government. In *LA II* he argued that the death of Irmengard, the *bona coniunx*, had made it necessary for Louis to remarry because it was essential for him to have a helpmeet, an *adiutrix*, in government. This connection between the queen's responsibility for *honestas* in the palace and her domestic responsibilities is also suggested in Adalhard's *De Ordine Palatii*.<sup>57</sup> The well known passage which describes the queen's duties in the royal household, detailing her formal relationship with the chamberlain and access to treasure actually begins with the words '*De honestate vero palatii ...*'. But Adalhard had insisted on a distinction between the two spheres of responsibility for king and queen: the queen's world was the palace which she must order so that the king, free from the burden of domestic affairs, could

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<sup>56</sup> The theme is explicit in the coronation *Ordo* of 877, Jackson, *Ordines*, pp. 121-2.

<sup>57</sup> See above, chapter 3.

devote his energy to government of the *regnum*. This was, however, a false distinction. The boundary between *regnum* and *palatium* was not fixed. Agobard did not admit the distinction, for him *regnum* and *palatium* were interdependent like husband and wife, who were 'one flesh'. The queen's adultery could therefore undermine the political stability of the empire itself. The idea of the queen sharing the reins of empire is found elsewhere, albeit in a poetic context: Ermold petitioning the Empress in 828 had addressed Judith as 'the one who rightly holds the reins of empire with him' [Louis].<sup>58</sup> Agobard, in this criticism of Judith, is affirming the political status of Frankish queens - their 'power-sharing' in the royal household. Yet, at the same time, the terms of his attack on Judith - her failure to live up to the ideal exposed her vulnerability.

Agobard, even when criticising Judith, was of course attacking Louis the Pious. Judith's deficiency in *honestas*, her unseemly behaviour in the palace, was presented by Agobard in terms of Louis' ignorance. The emperor was again cast as passive. This was a man incapable of ruling his own household, and therefore, in St Paul's terms, of holding office. Louis the Pious could not maintain Augustine's *pax domestica*.<sup>59</sup> Agobard regretted that no one had reminded the emperor of the terrible warnings to be found in Scripture:

"A virtuous woman is the crown of her husband but she who sows confusion in his affairs is as putrefaction in his bones" and again "A house with pestilence and a shrewish (*litigiosa*) woman are alike. Whoever keeps her it will be as if he held the wind or let oil slip through his hands".<sup>60</sup>

These quotations from Proverbs show Agobard beginning to move away from Judith and Louis as individuals. He was now placing them within a disturbing biblical

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<sup>58</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>59</sup> Boshof, *Ezbischof Agobard*, on Augustine's *pax domestica*, p. 232, with note 77; see also Smith, 'Gender', pp. 63-64.

<sup>60</sup> *LA I*, cap. V, p.311, with citation from Prov; 12:4,27:15-16.



typology, that of wives who have harmed their husbands. We also see the appeal for him, perhaps unconsciously, of bodily metaphors. The horrifying image of corruption deep within the bones of the body is, of course, only the negative side of St Paul's idea of husband and wife as one flesh. It also represents a distortion of what should be the legitimate and natural outcome of sexual intercourse within marriage namely the birth of children. The perverted sexual act does not engender new life within the wife's body but ultimately death for the husband. The evil wife is putrefaction - she rots the body of her husband and destroys him from the inside. The virtuous wife, by contrast, is a crown (*corona*), a metaphor aptly transferable to a queen.

Agobard then retreats a little from these images, and we can discern him engaging with other views of Judith. She is more than the textual stereotype of the evil queen. Indeed his attack on Judith assumes that his audience shares and understands his assumptions. Next we find him addressing, albeit rhetorically, a dissenting voice:

'But perhaps there will be someone who will say, "She is not shrewish (*litigiosa*) but sweet and reasonable (*suavis et blandis*)". The response to such words must be that there could be no worse cause of dispute (*litigium*) than to anger a good father against his sons and to desire to provoke, dishonour and alienate them. And what is beauty (*pulchritudo*) that only causes men to fall in love wrongfully (*inofficose*), in a way inappropriate to their duty. It says in the same scriptures: "Charm is a delusion and beauty (*pulchritudo*) is empty. A woman who fears the Lord praises herself".<sup>61</sup>

Agobard oscillated between criticism of Judith as an evil woman and criticism of the behaviour of a specific individual known to his audience. *LA 1* was a polemic that sought to convince an audience of an argument. Agobard had therefore to address

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<sup>61</sup> *Sed forte dicturus est aliquis: 'Hec non est litigiosa, sed suavis et blanda'. Quibus verbis respondendum est, non esse maius litigium, quam boni patris bonos filios irritare, exacerbare, exhonerare et poenitus a patre alienare velle. Que quia propter solam pulcritudinem a viro inofficose diligere fertur, inculcandum utrique fuerat quod iterum eadem Scriptura dicit: 'Fallax gratia, et vana est pulchritudo. Mulier timens Dominum, ipsa laudabitur.'* *LA 1*, cap. V, p.311-12, with ref to Prov; 31:30.



other points of view about Judith in his audience and counter them. Agobard was aware that his view of Judith as a *litigiosa mulier* might not be universal.

The attack on Judith as a shrewish or quarrelsome woman was essentially an attack on her speech. It is a recognition of her influence at court where she acted as patron and intercessor. Agobard is expressing an anxiety about the power and persuasiveness of feminine speech. Judith had a reputation for learning and bookishness. This was praiseworthy in the eyes of Walahfrid, Freulf, Hrabanus and the Chelles annalist. Yet intellectual interests and pursuits in a woman, particularly the ability to argue a case and offer counsel, or indeed even a natural and telling 'way with words' might also be feared and especially in a sexually attractive woman. In Agobard's eyes Judith's speech was used destructively to alienate father and sons. And if she had talents of persuasion, diplomacy and oral fluency this may have been a particular issue for Agobard who been unable to figure out how to work the patronage system at court to his advantage. Unlike Wala, Hilduin and Ebo, other senior churchmen who supported Lothar in 833, Agobard was no courtier and, as we have seen, had been distinctly uncomfortable with the way influence with the emperor was negotiated. Perhaps Agobard lacked the necessary courtly smoothness and polish, the ability to talk and persuade, which might be crucial in the 'face to face culture' of the Carolingian palace. It was precisely this kind of social skill that underpinned political success at court. Throughout the 820s and early 830s Judith had proved herself able to form relationships with a succession of leading men at court, including the newly arrived seneschal Adalhard, which suggests that she had become accomplished in negotiating social and political relationships in the palace. So what Agobard may have lacked in terms of interpersonal skills and knowledge of how things were managed at court, Judith had in abundance. Yet it wasn't just Judith's speech and intellect that bothered Agobard, he seems to have been anxious about female sexuality itself. Judith is condemned as a woman, for her sexual attractiveness. Her beauty (*pulchritudo*) is an evil because it disrupts the rightful ordering of relations between man and woman, in marriage. It causes other men to sin. Judith's beauty, like her speech, is not neutral but a source of moral danger. Agobard labels her sexual attractiveness as essentially deceitful because it is not matched by inner moral virtue.

Agobard concluded his text with a call to action. He addresses all who fear and love the Lord, king and kingdom and peaceful society. In a final and revealing physical image of the *regnum* as a wounded body he demands that 'the wound of evil should be removed and covered over with the scar tissue of sound health'.<sup>62</sup> *LA I* opens and closes with Agobard focusing on Judith and her disruptive sexual impact. Although *LA I* is directed against Louis the Pious, it is Judith who acts as the lightning conductor. In Agobard's eyes Judith was a perjured adulteress, she was expendable. Yet it needs to be remembered who Agobard was writing for, because he would not have been able to attack Lothar's mother in the same terms. Judith could become the symbol of all that was rotten in the regime of Louis the Pious because Lothar had no personal interest in her reputation as a chaste woman.

What is distinctive about *LA I*, however, is the fact that Agobard theorises about the nature of the authority of the queen. At the same time as he is engaging in a political debate about a particular queen's behaviour as an individual, Agobard makes a distinction between the person and their role or office. This parallels the similar development of a distinction between the person and office of emperor in the 820s and of course this idea underpinned the arguments for the deposition of Louis the Pious himself. Agobard's text thus reveals a familiarity with the cutting edge of contemporary ideas about office. The positive argument for queenship that is entangled in his attack on Judith may also relate to the fact that he wrote in support of Lothar. This is hardly surprising: if Lothar, after Rotfeld, was to rule in place of his father, then *his* wife Irmengard was to take up the responsibility of queen and have the care of the *honestas* of the palace envisaged by Agobard. The duality of senior and junior palaces would go. Lothar might attack the chastity of his stepmother but he had no intrinsic interest in an attack on legitimate female authority as exercised by Carolingian queens.

What was the impact of *LA I*? On the face of it Agobard's polemic can be judged a success. Agobard's objectives were achieved. Louis and Judith were captured at Rotfeld and, as far we know, without bloodshed or armed conflict. Judith was

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<sup>62</sup> *LA I*, cap. VI, p.312.



immediately removed from Francia to exile in Italy. Louis the Pious was held in Lothar's custody. It is, of course, impossible to judge how far these events were influenced by the dissemination of the arguments of *LA I*. The most damning aspect of the text was perhaps not the attack on Judith as such but the allegations about the emperor's state of health, the imputation of senility and impotence and loss of control over his wife and the palace itself. For Agobard, however, there was one crucial outcome of Lothar's seizure of power: five months later he was able to write *LA II* which was a defence of the penance and permanent deposition of the emperor.

*LA II* has a different tone and, I suggest, was addressed to a narrower audience. Agobard's concern in *LA II* was to defend the actions of the bishops at Soissons. It can best be seen as an attempt to steady the nerves of the relatively small number of churchmen who supported Lothar. These included great churchmen and courtiers such as Hilduin, Wala, and the emperor's childhood playmate Ebo, archbishop of Rheims. The actions of biblical holy men such as Elijah and Jehoida in opposing unjust rulers is praised. Agobard was convinced of the righteousness of the emperor's deposition which he interpreted in terms of the redemption of Louis the Pious, saved from the consequences of his sins by a loving son. There is a shift in emphasis from the earlier *LA I*. Judith remains the demonised figure of discord but it is Louis the Pious who is consistently the central subject of *LA II*. As the text progresses Judith ceases to exist as an individual and Agobard offers no further discussion of her exercise of authority as queen in the royal household. He emphasizes Judith's illegitimate occupancy of the status of queen. Agobard reminds his audience that when Judith returned to the palace in 830 she had no right to the status of Louis' wife:

'She was brought back to the palace and taken up into consortship (*assumpta in consorcium*) just as if (*quasi*) she was a legitimate wife, which was in no way the case.'<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *LA II*, cap. III, p.316.



This attack on Judith's marital status was essential to Agobard's apologetic. The permanent separation of husband and wife, the breaking of the marriage debt and the obligations of the couple to be 'one flesh', was clearly in contradiction to the teaching of Paul and Augustine. (Here Agobard was reverting back to the theme of Judith's adultery in *LA I*.) Judith had no competence to exercise the responsibilities and office of queen because she was no longer in the full sense the wife of Louis the Pious. Agobard insisted that Judith as a 'bogus' or '*quasi*' wife was placed 'shamefully and indecently in the royal position' (*in fastigio regali*). The consequence of her illegitimate occupancy of queenly authority was the increase of evil.<sup>64</sup>

Agobard developed his theme of marital reciprocity which lies at the centre of *LA I*. In *LA II* Judith was added to a catalogue of Old Testament women, namely Jezebel, Athaliah, Delilah and Job's wife, who either harmed, or attempted to harm, public men. Agobard, then, constructed his defence of the indefensible, sons in resistance to the authority of their father, by placing Louis the Pious in relation to a series of flawed leaders in the Old Testament. (The problem for Agobard was the absence of any Old Testament models for sons in righteous rebellion to save a father from himself.) Agobard assembled biblical case-studies of men who sinned at the urging of women and as a consequence forfeited political authority.

In *LA II* Agobard imagined Judith as a malevolent influence; central to his argument was that Louis the Pious had been deceived by an evil and unrighteous wife. Faced with this intolerable situation Agobard argued that the sons of the emperor had no alternative but to rescue their father from the clutches of Judith, lest Louis the Pious should share the fate of Ahab, the Old Testament king who did evil in the sight of the Lord at the urging of his wife Jezebel. The analogy of Louis the Pious with Ahab was, as Agobard was acutely aware, neither happy nor apt. Ahab had, certainly, allowed himself to be deceived by his wife Jezebel and had profited from the murder of Naboth. But his dynasty had been deprived of the kingship because he had committed abomination - he had caused his people to turn away from God and worship false

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<sup>64</sup> '*Collocata itaque turpiter et indecenter in fastigio regali, prius malum auxit et multiplicavit.*' *LA II*, cap. III, p.316.

idols. Agobard could not accuse Louis the Pious of causing the Franks to err from the Christian faith nor, since he was writing for Lothar, could Agobard foresee the downfall of the dynasty! Louis' abomination had, instead, to be figurative.<sup>65</sup> Jezebel, the evil queen who offered her husband malign counsel, loved royal luxury and painted her face to attract men, was eventually killed by her enemies as punishment for her crimes.<sup>66</sup> The death of Ahab's daughter Athaliah, another evil queen, executed on the orders of the priest Jehoida, was also related by Agobard.<sup>67</sup> The downfall of Ahab's dynasty, the violent deaths meted out to his wife Jezebel and daughter Athaliah, spoke forcefully of the righteous anger and power of holy men to effect divinely sanctioned political change. This was a message of reassurance both for Agobard's clerical audience and indeed, for Lothar: punishment was gendered, it was Ahab's female heir, Athaliah who was ultimately deprived of her life and rulership. The association of Judith, imprisoned in Italy by Lothar, with these biblical queens, however indirect, was troubling.

Jezebel and Athaliah were Agobard's most powerful and significant examples of evil queens but he had another biblical woman to offer. Agobard's other example of a public man ruined was Samson, who 'loved a woman who did not love him', a comment which suggests a reference back to the concerns of *LA I* and Agobard's remarks on the emperor's disastrous conjugal relationship with Judith. Samson had put his trust in an unrighteous woman, Delilah, and had lost his sight and the leadership (*ducatus*) of the people of Israel. So, as in Ahab's case, Samson's trust in a female sexual partner was presented as leading to the loss of political office and authority. Despite his emasculation at the hands of a sexually assertive woman, Samson proved to be a far less troubling example for the emperor than Ahab because Samson remained a righteous man, a *vir iustus*. Samson redeemed himself in death;

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<sup>65</sup> *LA II*, cap. III, p. 316-17.

<sup>66</sup> 3 Kings, 16: 31; 19: 1-2; 5-16, 23; 4 Kings 9: 30-37. See with Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels', pp. 31-77.

<sup>67</sup> 4 Kings, 11: 13-16; *LA II*, cap. V, p. 318.



he had lost the *ducatus* of Israel but he did not forfeit the heavenly kingdom and eternal salvation.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, Agobard considered Louis the Pious, who, because he had been deceived by his own Delilah, Judith, had lost his earthly kingdom and temporal authority.

Agobard also reproached Louis the Pious with the example of the blessed Job who endured the divine will and resisted the urging of his wife to curse God.<sup>69</sup> Here again was a reference to the persuasive power and danger of a woman's words and by implication Judith's bad counsels to the emperor. In *LA II* Agobard concluded that Louis the Pious, ultimately, could not be likened to impious or unfaithful kings. Yet because the emperor had allowed himself to be deceived by a woman he was therefore responsible for the disruption of his household. Agobard quoted from Proverbs: 'whosoever disturbs (*conturbat*) his own house, he will possess the winds'.<sup>70</sup> In other words he will own nothing. The proverb expresses futility and echoes the earlier quotation about the husband who keeps a shrewish wife.<sup>71</sup> It was this violation of the *domus*, which for a king was the palace, the emperor's failure to maintain the *pax domestica*, which of course included control of his wife, that was the emperor's ultimate sin. The result of this *conturbatio* was the disruption of the *regnum* itself.

Agobard's rich, contradictory and agile polemic offered in support of Lothar's cause in 833 repays careful scrutiny on two key points. First, Agobard's attack on Judith and the imperial household would have been empty and fanciful rhetoric unless the queen mattered. Secondly, and just as important for Agobard's argument, marriage itself was now identified as crucial to the exercise of royal rule.

One aspect, however of Agobard's thought which was wishful thinking if not self-deception, was the presentation of Louis' sons acting as a united front. Lothar did

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<sup>68</sup> *LA II*, cap. VI, p. 318.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> '*sed, quia permisit se a muliere iniqua decipi, contigit illi quod scriptum est. Qui conturbat domum suam, possidebit ventos*'. *LA II*, cap. VII, p. 319.

<sup>71</sup> As note 60.



not have the unequivocal support of his brothers: that had already been suggested at Rotfeld itself when Lothar had reneged on his agreement to allow Judith to be held in the care of Louis the German and Emma. The judgement against the emperor at Compiègne and the penance imposed at Soissons were directed by Lothar alone. The young Louis and Pippin did not share Lothar's agenda. Louis the German was so distressed by Lothar's treatment of his father that he arranged a meeting with his elder brother in early December to urge him to treat their father with greater respect and filial piety.<sup>72</sup> Lothar's fledgling regime was inherently unstable, for he discovered that he could not replace his father's authority. By Christmas 833 Lothar's rule was becoming unacceptable to a sufficient number of the Frankish aristocracy to make his position untenable. Lothar brought his father with him to spend Christmas at Aachen and renewed his attempt to get the emperor to agree to enter a monastery. Louis the Pious refused vigorously. Meanwhile from both sides of the Charbonnière forest the armies of Pippin and Louis the German marched on Aachen. Lothar brought his father - still under close guard - to Paris where he found Pippin's army. On 28th February 834, Lothar left his father at Paris and fled south. The crisis begun at Rotfeld eight months before, was over.<sup>73</sup>

During the previous eight months Louis the Pious had been deprived of his *imperium* and of his marriage. He immediately set about transforming and restoring his status. Louis had laid down his royal garments and his *cingulum militiae* at Soissons. He rejoined the worldly *res publica* in the ancient royal monastery of St Denis:

'...the bishops who had been present there came and reconciled the lord emperor in the church of St Denis, and clad him in his royal robes and his weapons.'<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *AB*, an 833, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup> *AB* an 834, p. 11-12; Thegan cap. 48, pp. 240-42; Astron, cap 5, pp. 486-90.

<sup>74</sup> *Annals of St Bertin*, translated Janet L Nelson, an 834, p. 29; Astron as previous note.

In this 'reconciliation', taking up his sword and royal clothing, Louis the Pious reclothed himself with the responsibilities of manhood and kingship. His next act was to recall his wife. If Louis the Pious was to fully reaffirm and renew his imperial status and patrimonial authority, he needed his queen in his palace and in his bed. In sending for Judith immediately the emperor signalled his determination to face down the accusations of Agobard and Lothar.

Meanwhile Judith remained imprisoned in the fortress of Tortona yet as Lothar's power collapsed in early 834 so her position changed. Lothar's flight from Paris shows just how tenuous his control over his forces had become. The palace annalist, writing with hindsight later in the year, mentioned fears that Lothar's supporters in Italy, (possibly on his orders?) had intended to kill Judith:

'... when those who were the Lord emperor's faithful men in Italy - Bishop Ratold, Count Boniface, Pippin, the emperor's kinsman, and a number of others - realised that some of his enemies wanted to bring about the death of his wife, they sent men as fast as they could who rescued her and brought her safe and sound to Aachen to the presence of the Lord emperor.'<sup>75</sup>

Thegan, on the other hand, insists that the initiative to rescue Judith came from the emperor himself, who, hearing of her plight, sent faithful men to her aid. This could be an attempt to blacken the reputation of Lothar and his men, but threats of violence and physical intimidation are a recurring theme in Judith's career. Reuter has observed that political violence is rarer in Carolingian sources than Merovingian. Perhaps this is all the more reason to take note of the use of physical aggression and intimidation when they are mentioned explicitly. The 830s were turbulent times in Frankish politics. The oaths sworn by Lothar at Rotfeld, that he would neither kill nor in any way harm his stepmother and younger brother, should be remembered. Lothar was clearly experiencing difficulty in maintaining command of his followers and the disintegration of the rebellion created opportunities for revenge and the settling of

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<sup>75</sup> *Annals of St Bertin*, transl. Nelson, an 834, p. 30



personal scores.<sup>76</sup> Judith was luckier than those who fell into the hands of Lothar's retreating warband in 834. At the sack of Chalon, Gerberga, sister of Bernard of Barcelona, was placed in a barrel and drowned in the Saone as a witch. Gerberga, like her brother, was part of the Frankish elite, a member of the Carolingian family but she was condemned not by Lothar but by the wives of his counsellors. This episode reveals a rare glimpse of gendered roles amongst the aristocracy in terms of judgement and the distribution of punishment.<sup>77</sup> There was clearly a great deal of animosity amongst Lothar's following towards Bernard and his kin in 834 and this suggests that the allegations about his affair with Judith were still live in people's memories. The orders to kill Judith may have come from Lothar himself: unable to prevent the restoration of his father the emperor, he had it in his power to ensure that his stepmother did not return to rule in the palace at Aachen. And if Judith could be presented to Lothar and his circle as a Jezebel then it might have seemed appropriate to give her Jezebel's death by throwing her down from the walls of Tortona? Another possibility is that Judith's guards may have been contemplating killing their prisoner as a desperate measure to prevent the emperor learning first hand of her experience and their identities. Judith's moment of greatest danger did not come, then, whilst Lothar had power firmly in his grip but as it slipped from his grasp. Fortunately for Judith the gravity of her situation was not lost on her husband nor on the emperor's faithful men in Italy. This was, above all, a time of political confusion and uncertainty for the empire-wide aristocracy. The failure of Lothar's regime and his eventual retreat to Lombardy created a political dilemma for those Italian *fideles* who had not marched north with him to Rotfeld. Pippin, described by the annalist as the emperor's kinsman, was in fact the great-nephew of Louis the Pious. He was the son of Bernard of Italy who had been blinded on the orders of the emperor in 818 as the penalty for rebellion against his uncle.<sup>78</sup> Pippin's family history gave him insight into the kind of

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<sup>76</sup> Janet Nelson makes the point that the armed men who made up the following of great magnates were not easily controlled, 'Violence in the Carolingian world', p. 96.

<sup>77</sup> For the sack of Chalon, Nithard, I, cap 5, pp. 20-22; the death of Gerberga, Thegan, cap. 52, pp. 244. Violence perpetrated or sanctioned by women in this period would reward further study. Bernard's brother Heribert, had been blinded on the orders of Lothar at Compiègne in 830, Astron cap. 45, p. 460 and see above, chapter 4.

<sup>78</sup> See above, chapter 1.



retribution Louis the Pious had meted out in the past to those who lacked faithfulness to their lord and emperor. But he also knew that the rewards of loyal service would be the emperor's love and gratitude. Bishop Ratold, an Alemannian like Judith, Count Boniface of Lucca and Pippin seized the opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty and good faith to the emperor.<sup>79</sup> They were also, surely, presuming on the gratitude and generosity not only of the emperor but of Judith herself.

The opportunity to render service to the imperial couple was not confined to this trio. The endeavours of Ruadbern, another Alemanian aristocrat, not a count but a young *fidelis*, possibly one of the *scolares* in the palace who surrounded Judith, went unnoticed by the palace annalist. Ruadbern also had a part to play in the drama of Judith's rescue and according to Walahfrid it was a leading role. In the poem written to applaud and celebrate Ruadbern's part in Judith's release Walahfrid describes him as a mere slip of a lad - a beardless youth - but eager to prove his loyalty and service to the imperial couple. According to Walahfrid, Judith's release was all thanks to Ruadbern's combination of physical courage, daring and shrewdness:

'But your mind was filled with a loyalty that no hardship could weary; and it would not abandon the task it had previously undertaken out of any fear or desire for rest until, by means of the written and spoken word, you managed to rouse the hearts of leading magnates throughout the West to indignation at this unholy wickedness, and it was finally agreed on your advice that the queen, exhausted and long oppressed by the weight of her sufferings, should be released with great honour from the barbarism and darkness in which she was held; at length, and by covert means of stealth you reached her and, taking her sweet messages, swiftly, with a good will, you were the first to carry them to the pious emperor and to his closest friends.'<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Pippin: Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 246-7; Ratold: Depreux, *Prosopographie*, no 245, pp. 371-2; Boniface: *ibid*, no 55, pp. 143-44.

<sup>80</sup> To Ruadbern, Godman, *Poetry*, vv. 34-44, pp. 218-9

So Ruadbern too had a hand in the rescue of the empress and her return from Tortona to Francia, alongside 'leading magnates' such as Ratold, Boniface and Pippin. In Walahfrid's judgement neither Louis the Pious nor Judith would forget young Ruadbern's courage and committed loyalty:

'For these services, on account of your successful exploits, the king on his return and the queen on being set free, and all their faithful retainers, filled with gratitude, shall exalt your reputation in ever higher praise.'<sup>81</sup>

Louis the Pious received Judith at Aachen with celebration, she was led *cum iocunditate et laetitia* into the presence of the emperor. This public re-entry at Aachen was surely to impress on the court and the aristocracy present that Judith had returned to her position as queen and mistress of the household: her status was not negotiable. Easter was celebrated at Aachen with full solemnity and joyfulness.<sup>82</sup>

Louis the Pious reasserted his imperial authority. He delivered the *coup de grace* in the paper war: Lothar's propaganda was answered by the emperor's official, written version of events agreed with the bishops.<sup>83</sup> The obligations sons owe to fathers were the theme of a text written by Hrabanus and offered to the emperor after his restoration. Judith survived Agobard's calumnies and her re-invention as Jezebel and Delilah. Indeed in the remaining years of Louis' reign, as their son approached the age of manhood, Judith's profile as queen was heightened. It is in the years after the trauma of Tortona that we have evidence for Judith acting more conspicuously as queen.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> '*hilariter*', Easter was celebrated on 5th April, *AB*, an 834, p. 12

<sup>83</sup> *AB*, an 835, p. 16.



## Chapter 7

### *'The queen, who counts for much...'*

834-840

When Judith returned to Aachen at Easter 834 and resumed her position in the royal household Louis the Pious was fifty-six years old: he died six years later, on June 20th 840. The historiography of these final years of the reign, such as it is, serves almost as a parody of the traditional judgements of Judith. Louis the Pious has been represented as an aging and enfeebled ruler, humiliated and broken by the events of 833, whose declining health made him prey to the wiles of his still youthful wife and her faction. As Louis the Pious declined, so Judith strengthened her grip and manipulated her husband to achieve her own selfish ends to the detriment of imperial unity<sup>1</sup>. Judith's promotion of Charles the Bald did not, however, form the basis of contemporary criticism of the empress. The development of Judith's queenship in Louis' "last years" has its own context and does not need to depend on a view of politics where the emperor was putty in her hands.

It is possible to take a positive view of the emperor's regime in these years not least because neither Louis the Pious nor his sons knew that these were the 'last years' of the reign. In 834 it is hard to determine signs of any lack of physical vigour or firmness of purpose manifest in the emperor's responses to his opponents; a dominant theme of the *AB* in the years 835 onwards is the single-mindedness of the emperor in responding to the threat of the Vikings.<sup>2</sup> Louis the Pious answered the critics of his kingship decisively; having taken up his sword belt at St Denis he showed that he was prepared to use it. Lothar's flight from Paris had neither ended nor resolved the

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<sup>1</sup> 'The picture of a pathetic old man in the hands of a scheming young woman is the fantasy of nineteenth century not ninth century historians', thus Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 98. See above, Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> J L Nelson, 'The last years of Louis the Pious', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 147-160. For a less optimistic view of the regime in these years see P Depreux, 'Nithard et la *res publica*: un regard critique sur le regne de Louis le Pieux', *Medievales* 22-23, 1992, pp. 149-161. For Viking raids see below, notes 50-51.



conflict with his father. The fighting had merely been postponed. After the Easter celebrations and hunting with his *fideles* in the Ardennes and Vosges the emperor turned to the task of pursuing Lothar and compelling him to accept defeat. The bloodiest encounter was in the 'cockpit of aristocratic rivalries', the Loire valley, where in the hard fought campaign against Lambert and Matfred, the emperor lost some of his leading men including Theoto, abbot of St Martin and arch-chancellor.<sup>3</sup> It was not until September at Blois that the emperor defeated his son and forced him to return to Italy. Lothar's departure, with his *proceres*, south of the Alps was certainly a success for the emperor but it was hard won. The young Louis, who had played a crucial role in the restoration of his father was allowed to return to Bavaria. Sometime in 834, Pepin received a group of allods in Anjou in addition to the kingdom of Aquitaine.<sup>4</sup> There was, however, no statement of arrangements for Charles the Bald or indication of where his future *regnum* might lie. The emperor's attempt in 832 to deprive Pepin of the kingdom of Aquitaine in favour of his youngest son had proved unworkable and led to open rebellion. A continuing commitment of Louis the Pious to the endowment of Charles the Bald anchored Judith more firmly in political patronage. The recent carnage in the west was a pointed lesson in how much work remained to be done by both Louis and Judith in building a political consensus around the young Charles the Bald. The exclusion of Lothar from his foothold north of the Alps was certainly a victory for the emperor but, in the longer term, it was in Judith's interest and, that of her son, to arrive at a rapprochement with Lothar and his supporters.

Louis the Pious sought more than the military defeat of Lothar in 834, he also pursued a moral and ideological victory. The emperor judged that the events at Compiègne and Soissons, and Agobard's rhetorical attack on his kingship were too serious to ignore. His immediate concern, however, was a moral crusade against

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<sup>3</sup> See the comments of JL Nelson on this important battle, *The Annals of St Bertin*, notes 7-9, p. 30. A casualty list is provided in the *AB*, an 834, p. 13: the dead included count Odo, his brother William and Fulbert. The sack of Chalon by Lothar's men is described in detail by Nithard, I, cap 5, pp. 20-22.

<sup>4</sup> The evidence is from a mid-ninth century source Odo, *Miracula S. Mauri*, ed. O Holder Egger, MGH SS 15.1, p. 467.

filial disobedience. In the appeals to his recalcitrant and disobedient son to submit to the authority of a merciful father Louis hit back from a position of ideological strength. Agobard had had to search for biblical authorities and narratives to use against Louis the Pious - which explains his use of Judith - where the emperor had only to point to the divine injunction to obey parental authority. Marward of Prüm was sent as a legate to Lothar with a letter urging him to be reconciled to his father. The emperor spoke plainly to his son:

“... he should understand the judgement of the Lord for contempt of his commandment. For God spoke in his commandments: "Honour your father and mother" and again "whosoever speaks ill of father or mother shall deserve death"<sup>5</sup>

In the *Relatio* of the bishops at Compiègne and Agobard's *LA*, Lothar had maligned both his father and stepmother. The emperor's harsh response was both as father and husband. But it was Hrabanus Maurus' elaborate and detailed commentary on the theme of filial piety - offered to Louis the Pious in 834 - which was the fullest answer to Lothar. It also reveals just how far Agobard's rhetoric and arguments ran against the grain. Hrabanus presented Louis with twelve chapters which constituted a terrifying homily on the obligations children owe their parents, including the harsh penalties for filial disobedience.<sup>6</sup> Hrabanus piled up apposite quotations - from Deuteronomy, Proverbs, the Gospels and St Paul. He was certainly mining a rich seam and we can discern in these *capitula* an attempt to parry Agobard's preoccupations in the *LA*. The abbot of Fulda put his exegetical scholarship firmly behind the emperor in 834 to refute the legitimacy of Lothar's rebellion and, more generally, the claims of the *Relatio* and Agobard's *LA*. I suggest that he was ready to do the same for the empress.

Hrabanus offered Judith a group of scholarly texts which emphasized both her courage in the face of recent adversity and articulated ideas about her status as queen.

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<sup>5</sup> Thegan, cap 53, p. 246.

<sup>6</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, *Liber de reverentia filiorum erga patres et subditorum erga reges*, MGH Epp 5, pp. 404-415.



The biblical commentaries on the books of Judith and Esther which Hrabanus presented to the empress cannot be dated with the same precision as his text on filial obedience. There are, however, sufficient grounds for considering them in a similar context.<sup>7</sup> The dedicatory letter in which Hrabanus introduces his commentaries to the empress provides a clear *terminus post quem* for composition. The reference to the tribulations of the empress and her success in overcoming her enemies places the gift in the period after her return to the palace in either 831 or 834.<sup>8</sup> A recent commentator who has addressed the problem of dating, Elizabeth Sears, has suggested the context of the restoration of Louis the Pious in 833. Her argument concerns the *carmen figuratum* containing a miniature portrait of the empress which accompanied the texts. She sees the portrait of the empress and the commentaries forming a companion piece to Hrabanus *De laudibus sanctae crucis* which also contained a *carmen figuratum* of the emperor<sup>9</sup>. I suggest that the dedicatory letters, *carmen figuratum* and the narratives of the commentaries themselves should be understood together as constituting a powerful response to Agobard's attack on Judith in 833.

This kind of exegetical writing was Hrabanus' forte, and in the 830s he dedicated biblical commentaries to his intellectual circle.<sup>10</sup> Indeed his exegesis became an authoritative model for later commentators.<sup>11</sup> In the dedicatory letter which

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<sup>7</sup> Judith: PL 109, cols. 542-91; Esther: PL 109, cols. 635-70.

<sup>8</sup> Migne dated the texts to 834, PL, 109, col. 539; E. Dümmler, 'Hrabanstudien', *Sitzungsberichte der königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, (1898), pp. 24-42, 41; *idem* MGH Epp. 5, p. 421, at note 3, where he dates the offering of these texts to Judith to circa 834.

<sup>9</sup> 'Louis the Pious as *miles christi* : the dedicatory image in Hrabanus Maurus's *De laudibus sanctae crucis*', in *Charlemagne's Heir* pp. 605-28, at 621. See with M de Jong, 'The empire as *ecclesia*: Hrabanus Maurus and biblical *historia* for rulers, in *Uses of the Past*, pp. 191-226, 206ff.

<sup>10</sup> Recipients of commentaries included Hilduin: PL 109, col. 9; Louis the German: *ibid.*, col. 1126.

<sup>11</sup> On Carolingian exegesis see B Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Oxford (1983), pp. 37-46



accompanied the commentaries Hrabanus quoted from Jerome's preface to the book of Judith where the saint had imagined the warrior-widow as an exemplum of chastity for both men and women.<sup>12</sup> The quotation from the Vulgate, rather than from an earlier commentary, may point to the fact that there was no earlier authority or exegete of this book, like Bede or Jerome himself, for Hrabanus to follow.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that Hrabanus' commentaries on the books of Esther and Judith are the earliest known examples of exegesis of these texts.<sup>14</sup> Hrabanus commentaries on these two powerful and courageous female biblical figures were not then, routine gifts. It was no accident that Hrabanus chose these two biblical heroines to present as models of queenly virtue and courage in the face of enemies. In other words they were prepared *ad feminam* - for a living Judith. The name Judith was itself unusual enough for a Frankish woman in the ninth century to suggest that the empress was conscious of the biblical associations and aura of her own name.<sup>15</sup> Frankish intellectuals, whether they celebrated or excoriated her reputation and behaviour were certainly aware of the 'theological vibrations' of her given name. Walahfrid had already compared his patron to her biblical namesake in his poem of 829 *De imagine Tetrici* where he had recounted the slaying of Holofernes and reminded the empress that she was not named Judith in vain.<sup>16</sup> Conversely, the praiseworthy and mythic power of the name Judith might have caused Agobard to avoid naming the empress in the *LA* - indeed it may have been Judith's name that led him to identify *all* the protagonists in his polemic by family status or office only. Twenty years later, Radbert confronted

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<sup>12</sup> 'Accipite Judith viduam castitatis exemplum', MGH, Epp. 5, p. 421; 'Accipite Judith viduam, castitatis exemplum, et triumphali laude, perpetuis eam praeconiis declarate. Hanc enim non solum feminis, sed et viris imitabilem dedit'. Jerome, PL 29, praefatio, col. 42.

<sup>13</sup> The *Clavis Patrum*, for example, provides no exegesis of these texts by the usual suspects, namely Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and Bede.

<sup>14</sup> Esther and Judith became established as a pair of appropriate models of chastity and virtue to offer queens, thus Hincmar in the 856 *ordo* for Charles the Bald's daughter Judith, Jackson, *Ordines*, p. 78; Nelson, 'Queen-making', pp. 307-08.

<sup>15</sup> See above, Introduction.

<sup>16</sup> See above, chapter 3.

the same problem in the *Epitaphium* and resolved it through the use of an elaborate system of pseudonyms.<sup>17</sup> Hrabanus' message in his dedicatory letter was straightforward: he exhorted the empress to see both of these biblical heroines as her models and guides in Christian virtue. The widow Judith, her equal in name, was an exemplar of chastity; queen Esther, her equal in dignity.<sup>18</sup> The biblical queen was a natural model of good queenship but the widow of Bethulia was a strange and unusual model to offer a queen unless, of course, they shared the same name. This suggests that the empress may already have held a special regard for her biblical namesake even to the extent of identifying with her as some kind of biblical 'patron'. Hrabanus, eager to become more closely connected with the empress as a potential patron, may have been responding to a learned fascination with the biblical Judith on the part of the empress. Careful examination of the Vulgate biographies of both biblical heroines, Esther and Judith, suggests that the empress may have found aspects of her own life reflected in their stories.

First, Queen Esther: singled out to be the wife and queen of King Ahasuerus after a search amongst the women of the kingdom, Esther had been chosen because she pleased the king best. This was also Judith's story, selected in February 819 as the emperor's second wife after he had emperor 'looked over the daughters of the nobility' at Aachen.<sup>19</sup> (It was also a pleasing coincidence that the story of Esther was also the story of a favoured second wife.) But above all, Esther was the model par excellence of queenly intercession. The Hebrew Esther's intrusion, unbidden, before her husband's Persian court, was a courageous act attended by considerable danger in the pursuit of justice and salvation for her people. Esther did not suffer the customary penalty of death but won her husband's favour. This story contained a clear lesson in

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<sup>17</sup> The only person identified under their own name in the *Epitaphium* is Lothar's queen Irmengard.

<sup>18</sup> '....*quarum unam coequitatis nomine, alteram dignitate*', MGH, Epp V, pp. 420-21.

<sup>19</sup> See above, chapter 2.



moral courage but there was also another coded and more gendered message, which the empress may have understood only too well, namely that a queen's ability to act at court, to intercede on behalf of suitors, was conditional on male approval, depending as it did on her ability to retain the favour of her husband. A queen's power and influence originated in the sexual relationship of marriage.

There was no such obvious point of contact in the story of the biblical Judith, a devout widow, and the empress who was a queen, a married woman, and a mother. Jerome's model of chastity was a far more ambivalent female heroine than Queen Esther: the biblical Judith had slain the enemy of her people, the general Holofernes, through deceit and the self-conscious deployment of female sexual allure. Agobard had condemned the beauty of the empress in the *LA* because it caused men to fall in love '*inofficose*': she was responsible for provoking male lust and stigmatised for her sexuality. The book of Judith offered a different view on female sexuality and male sexual response. The erotically unfulfilled encounter between the chaste and painted widow-heroine in the biblical story and the lustful drunken general ended with his death and the deliverance of the Israelites from their enemy. In the Vulgate, male lust towards a virtuous and beautiful woman is identified as sin and rewarded with death, a point underlined by Hrabanus.<sup>20</sup> His commentary on the book of Judith was, then, an apt and subtle gift, containing as it did an uplifting and edifying message for the empress who had only recently returned to the royal palace and the marital bed after the trauma of exile and the calumny disseminated by her stepsons through Agobard's *LA*.

Hrabanus offered the empress more than the commentaries on Esther and Judith, he also used visual imagery to express his support of Judith's queenship. The *carmen figuratum* that accompanied the texts is also of interest. Inscribed in the poem was a medallion portrait of the empress, the only surviving, contemporary image of

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<sup>20</sup> Hrabanus is aware that Judith slays Holofernes through guile but this is legitimate because the general represents a type of persecutor of the Christian church and the beast of the Apocalypse, see cols. 546, 559.



Judith.<sup>21</sup> There is no attempt at a likeness here, the portrait is a stylised representation derived from images of rulers in antique coins and ivories.<sup>22</sup> It is a simple head and shoulders portrait of Judith contained within a circle. Above her head, extended in a blessing, stretches the open right hand of God. She wears a headdress which the context enables us to interpret as a crown. Letters of the ground poem are arranged within the portrait to spell out prayers of protection. The text in the hand of God reads: 'Christ, right hand of God almighty, protect Judith, O exalted God, love' A prayer encircles her: 'Give to her, God, blessed gifts, the crown on high'.<sup>23</sup> What is distinctive about the image is that God's right hand appears above her head, extended in a blessing. The hand of God, the *manus Dei*, was the symbol of God the Father, of divine acknowledgement and approval and was rare in the representation of Christian rulers before the mid-ninth century. The presentation miniature in the First Bible of Charles the Bald, probably prepared at St Martin's Tours in 845, shows the young king seated on a throne with the hand of God extended in a blessing above his head, symbolising divine protection and supervision of his rule.<sup>24</sup> The *manus dei* above Judith's head may well be the earliest example of the use of this symbol in the representation of a named queen.<sup>25</sup> So in this tiny

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<sup>21</sup> P E Schramm and F Mütterich, *Denkmale der deutschen Könige und Kaiser*, 2nd edn. (Munich 1981), i, p. 121; P E Schramm, *Die deutschen Kaiser und Könige in Bildern ihrer Zeit 751-1190*, rev. edn., ed. F Mutherich, Munich, (1983) pp. 47-8, 159-60.

<sup>22</sup> F Mütterich, 'Der Karolingische Agrimensoren Codex in Rom', *Aachener Kunstblätter*, 45 (1974), pp. 59-74 where she connects the medallion portrait of Judith with a manuscript dated to the second quarter of the ninth century containing Carolingian copies of Roman coin portraits; Sears, 'Louis the Pious', p. 620 with n. 64.

<sup>23</sup> '*Dextra dei summi Criste  
Judith ipse tuere o deus altus amor  
Dona beata da deus illi arce coronam*'. The translation is by Peter Godman, in Sears, 'Louis the Pious', p. 620.

<sup>24</sup> P E Dutton, *The Poetry and Paintings of the First Bible of Charles the Bald*, Ann Arbor, (1997), p.4, p. 71 with note 4; see plate IV for the presentation miniature.

<sup>25</sup> There is an earlier example of a royal (?) woman blessed by the *manus dei* symbol in a law code collection from northern Italy which has been dated by Schramm to c817-823, but the identities of the highly stylized male and female figures in the manuscript are unknown although it is possible that they are Bernard and Cunigond, P

medallion portait Hrabanus chose to make a strong and unequivocal statement of divine approval for Judith's queenship: another rebuff to Agobard's attack on her fitness to occupy the office of queen in the *LA*.

The intellectual offerings of Hrabanus, the chapters on filial obedience for Louis the Pious and the texts for Judith were for a limited audience around the emperor and empress. The written word needed to be fleshed out with the public ritual of imperial authority. It was whilst Louis and Judith celebrated Christmas at Metz with Drogo, now archchaplain, that plans for the concluding rituals of the emperor's recovery of authority and the submission of his opponents were surely discussed. The humiliations of Compiègne and Soissons, when Louis the Pious had been judged by Lothar's bishops, allegedly agreed to a written statement of crimes and then abdicated his imperial authority, were to be reversed. Bad ritual was to be answered with good ritual. The 835 palace annal describes the unfolding of a three-part drama. First, at Thionville on 2 February the bishops were summoned and a correct, written version of the events of 833 was read out to the assembly and agreed. This was surely to counter the *Relatio* of 833. The proceedings then moved to Metz where on 28 February the emperor was crowned in Drogo's church whilst seven bishops chanted prayers over him. Then Ebo, alone of Lothar's episcopal allies, confessed that he had acted unworthily against the emperor. Finally at an assembly at Thionville on 4th March, Ebo was condemned and resigned as archbishop of Rheims. Agobard and other rebels were deposed in their absence.<sup>26</sup>

There were to be no formal public rituals of rehabilitation or restoration for Judith. On her return to the royal household at Easter 834 it appears that she was both immediately re-admitted to the royal bed and acknowledged as queen: one was not possible without the other. There was no period of uncertainty about her status such as had marked her return in 830. Louis the Pious did not hold her apart and there

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E Shramm, *Die deutschen Kaiser und Könige in Bildern ihrer Zeit 751-1190*, rev.edn., ed. F Mutherich, Munich, (1983) no 10, p. 286. The development of this gesture in the representation of queens would reward further study.

<sup>26</sup> *AB*, an 835, pp. 15-16.



was no appearance before an assembly to answer charges of unchastity. There is an obvious reason for this. Agobard had renewed accusations of adultery against Judith in 833, and the *Relatio* had charged Judith with perjury, but the emperor himself and his sexual failings were the true target of the *LA*. If Louis the Pious had any second thoughts about Judith's chastity he wisely kept them to himself. There was no need to give a further public airing to Agobard's allegations about the imperial marriage. It was better to answer the poisonous insinuations of the *LA* about the emperor's conjugal deficiencies and Judith's adultery with a display of uxoriousness and the representation of domestic harmony in the royal household. Only Nithard insists that in 834 Judith did not return to the marital bed until the emperor was satisfied of her chastity, and the historian seems to be confusing the events of 834 with those of 831.<sup>27</sup> Yet it is curious that it should be Nithard, writing less than seven years later and for Charles the Bald, who should get this wrong.<sup>28</sup> So are we catching Nithard out in a "Freudian slip"? Agobard had, after all, insisted that his allegations about Judith's unchastity were public knowledge. Nithard's mistake may be evidence of enduring mixed feelings about Judith's *honestas* post-834. This ambivalence is, of course, entirely absent from the controlled tone of the 'official version' in the 835 palace annal. It is evidence that Judith's chastity and reputation was of tremendous importance to Nithard, and indeed to her son, Charles the Bald

Louis the Pious displayed an impressive self-assurance and mastery of the repertoire of imperial ritual. The form and grandeur of the coronation at Metz in 835 were unprecedented. The occasion certainly made a deep impression on the young Hincmar.<sup>29</sup> What was its purpose? At one level it was, surely, a means of imposing obedience on a previously vacillating episcopate who were now challenged to commit

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<sup>27</sup> This is quite clear from the text. Judith had appeared before the assembly on Feb 2nd 831 to answer the charge of adultery and purged herself with the support of her kin. See above, chapter 5.

<sup>28</sup> Nithard began writing at the request of Charles the Bald in 841. See below, chapter 8.

<sup>29</sup> J.L.Nelson, 'Hincmar of Rheims on king-making: the evidence of the Annals of St Bertin, 861-882' p. 24 in *Coronations, medieval and early modern monarchic ritual*, ed., J. Bak, Berkeley, (1990). See now Jackson, *Ordines*, for the idea that 835 was reused for 869.



themselves unequivocally to the emperor in these ceremonies. But it was also a self-conscious exercise in repairing and reaffirming his authority to rule. Carl Richard Brühl categorised the extraordinary coronation at Metz as a "confirmatory coronation".<sup>30</sup> Louis had, after all, been first crowned as emperor by his father in 813 and then in 816 Louis and his first wife Irmegard were crowned by Pope Stephen on his visit to Francia.<sup>31</sup> Judith had probably been crowned by Louis the Pious in 819. Yet there was no comparable public ceremony affirming Judith's queenship after her return to the royal household from exile: she was not crowned beside Louis the Pious at Metz. Was the possibility of a 'confirmatory coronation' for Judith discussed whilst the court celebrated Christmas with Drogo at Metz? The detail of the ceremonies and events at Thionville and Metz suggests that Judith's lack of involvement in the coronation was deliberate. This was not the occasion for Drogo to draft a coronation ritual for Judith. No form of *ordo* for a queen's coronation existed until Hincmar of Rheims wrote one for the occasion of the marriage of Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, to Aethelwulf, king of the West Saxons, in 856.<sup>32</sup> One problem was that a blessing or *ordo* for Judith in 835 would emphasise her status as the wife of Louis the Pious and the mother of Charles the Bald. Agobard had homed in on the imperial marriage, what he saw as Judith's illegitimate occupancy of the role of queen and, by implication, the slighting of the sons of Irmengard through the promotion of Charles the Bald. A coronation for Judith in 835 may have been thought too much for the supporters of Lothar who had been the audience for Agobard's assault on Louis and Judith in the *LA*. Even Louis the Pious may have backed away from such a politically provocative and hostile action towards Lothar and his brothers. The settlement so recently imposed on Irmengard's sons was fragile and, as events would prove, unacceptable to Lothar. Louis the Pious spent the last years of his life fighting to maintain it. Judith had to be content with Hrabanus's portait in which she is blessed

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<sup>30</sup> 'Fränkischer Krönungsbrauch', *Historische Zeitschrift*, (1962), pp. 265-326, at p. 301.

<sup>31</sup> See above chapter 1, p.

<sup>32</sup> Judith's marriage: *AB* an 856, p. 73; P. Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', in *Court and Kingdom*, pp. 139-153. The point about Hincmar's *ordo* for Judith is made by Nelson, 'Queen-making', p. 306.

not by seven bishops but by the right hand of God himself as the promise of a heavenly crown is extended.

Judith is largely invisible in the narrative sources which describe the rituals of 835 because they are centred on the emperor. There was no place in these ceremonies for the representation of the imperial couple, of emperor and empress side by side. Judith is the absent presence, as she had been at Soissons and Compiègne. If the emperor can be said to have had a partner in these rituals it was not Judith but Ebo. The coronation of Louis the Pious at Metz was counter-pointed by Ebo's solitary confession: the reaffirmation of the emperor was balanced by the degradation of the archbishop who was the scapegoat for the failed rebellion. The account of Prudentius in the 835 annal underlines the acceptance of political arrangements defined by Louis the Pious and the representation of imperial control over episcopate, magnates and sons. A public ritual affirming Judith's status and authority as Louis' wife and queen might not have been considered directly relevant to these concerns. Yet there is other evidence to supplement this "official version" and if we look away from the 835 annal a more complex political picture emerges which places Judith at the centre of events. In a letter written by Charles the Bald to Pope Nicholas I in 867 the events surrounding Ebo's resignation and the restoration of the emperor are described in detail. Judith's son reveals that not only was the empress present at the assembly at Thionville in 835, but she was politically active behind the scenes on behalf of the archbishop. Ebo, like Agobard, was not connected by birth to the imperial aristocracy. Thegan villified his servile origins and consequent betrayal of the emperor. This made both archbishops vulnerable when the rebellion failed.<sup>33</sup> Yet, unlike Agobard, Ebo had been part of the court 'inner circle' and had knitted himself into the very fabric of relationships within the royal household through friendship with the emperor and, crucially, as events were to prove, with the empress.

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<sup>33</sup> Thegan, cap. 44, p. 232 ; J Martindale, 'The French aristocracy in the Early Middle Ages, Past and Present 75, (1977) pp. 5-45, 5-6, 16-17; the careers of Ebo and Agobard, the two, non-aristocratic rebel archbishops, are compared and contrasted by Airlie, 'Bonds', pp. 191-204.



Over thirty years later, Charles the Bald described to Pope Nicholas how Ebo, although imprisoned at Thionville, had managed to send a messenger called Framgaud to Judith with a ring. It was the the very same ring that Judith had sent to Ebo at the birth of Charles the Bald with the understanding that he was return it to her if he was in any difficulty so that she might intercede on his behalf.<sup>34</sup> In what is almost an aside Charles tells the pope that Ebo had been in the habit of doing this.<sup>35</sup> The ring had powerful personal and political associations for Judith and Ebo, signifying as it did both memories and obligations.<sup>36</sup> It represented a spiritual and political contract between the empress and archbishop. According to her son Judith acted on two fronts. First, she sought out the bishops who had convened at Thionville and attempted to persuade them that divine laws should not be transgressed: that they should seek to soften the mind of the emperor from too harsh a judgement on Ebo. Louis the Pious had good reason, both psychological and political, to want revenge on the archbishop who had betrayed his trust and loyalty. But it was probably Ebo's lack of aristocratic familial clout, his ignoble origins on the royal fisc, that allowed the emperor to make a public scapegoat of, and vent his anger against, his childhood friend. Earlier in the letter Charles the Bald tells how Ebo had fled from Paris to escape the pursuing '*ira*' of the emperor.<sup>37</sup> Judith reminded the bishops that since God had delivered them from such a great danger it would be unworthy of them to repay divine deliverance with unjust judgement. She also approached the emperor directly. Charles suggests that it was as a result of her initiative, her 'most moderate counsel', that Ebo resigned his see voluntarily, and critically, he did so in writing.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>35</sup> '*mittere solebat*', Bouquet VII, p. 558

<sup>36</sup> '*Tunc ipsa horum reminiscens, ejusque lacrymabilia suspiria agnoscens*', *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> The written confession and resignation of Ebo is also stressed in the *AB*, an 835, p. 17.



The whole purpose of Charles the Bald's account in this letter of the events at Thionville was to persuade Nicholas I that the removal of Ebo from the see of Rheims had been accomplished in accordance with canon law. The reality was that voluntary resignation had been coerced and thus, it could be argued, was indistinguishable from a deposition.<sup>39</sup> There were far-reaching political repercussions for the see of Rheims. Ebo was restored by Lothar in 840. So how should we approach this letter as evidence for Judith's role at Thionville when it seems to be yet another tendentious version of events? The first part of the narrative, the birth of Charles the Bald and Judith's relationship with the archbishop as expressed through the gift of the ring is unproblematic and the return of this token in 835 through a named messenger, Framgaud, is a telling detail. There is however, complementary evidence which suggests a wider interest in Ebo's case and a movement to lobby for his restoration. The bishops had made a recent and very public show of loyalty to the emperor in the ceremony at Metz. Loyalties were, however, far less clear cut than Thegan, Prudentius, and particularly Charles the Bald, suggest. Ebo was imprisoned at Fulda and we know that Hrabanus, in effect his gaoler, wrote to Marcward of Prüm to ask him to use his influence with the ten-year-old Charles the Bald to intercede with the emperor on behalf of the archbishop.<sup>40</sup> This suggests that the treatment of the archbishop caused unease amongst some of the Frankish clergy and maybe especially among Lothar's supporters.<sup>41</sup>

This letter constitutes our only description of Judith interceding with Louis the Pious, that is of a dynamic aspect of queenship in action. At one level we could interpret this episode simply as the means by which a negotiated settlement was mediated without loss of face or dishonour to both bishops and emperor. In this reading of events the queen's intercession becomes the acceptable instrument of compromise. But this interpretation of Judith's action at Thionville is not wholly satisfactory. The problem is that Charles the Bald described an intercession by his mother which, judged at face

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<sup>40</sup> *Epistolarum Fuldensium Fragmenta*, MGH Epp 5, p. 521.

<sup>41</sup> For other accounts of Thionville and support for Ebo see *BM2*, 938b.

value, was only a qualified success. In Ebo's terms it was surely a failure. Unlike the model intercession of Queen Esther before King Ahasuerus in the Vulgate there was no happy ending. What Ebo wanted was to be released from prison and restored to the archbishopric of Rheims. The problem is that Charles the Bald is ambiguous about the exact nature of Judith's request to Louis the Pious. A clue may lie in the ominous reference to the unspecified 'harsher judgement' which Judith was able to mitigate through 'moderate counsel' with the emperor. (It is possible Charles the Bald was hinting that the death penalty hung over Ebo.<sup>42</sup>) If Judith asked Louis the Pious that Ebo be allowed to return to his see, or be allowed to go into exile, then clearly the emperor chose to disregard the pleas of his wife. Indeed in his letter Charles stresses the heartfelt animosity of his father (and of himself!) towards the traitrous archbishop. This raises the possibility that his mother Judith, like the heroic biblical queen Esther, dared risk the displeasure of her husband in pursuit of justice and mercy.

So why did Judith undertake such an uncertain enterprise? What persuaded her to intercede for Ebo at Thionville? First, we need to consider Judith's appraisal of her status as queen and the responsibilities of office. Secondly, we need to examine the nature of intercession itself. Individuals can of course mould their actions to fit models of behaviour and Judith had recently been offered the model of Queen Esther by Hrabanus and encouraged to identify with the biblical queen and imitate her queenship.<sup>43</sup> The empress, responding to Hrabanus, may have taken Esther's story to heart. But there is a particular reason for supposing that Judith might have been inclined to identify with Queen Esther: the manner in which they had both been chosen as second wives by their royal husbands. Inspired by the biblical queen, Judith may have been prepared to intercede for Ebo and re-enact Esther's example of good queenship before the bishops and emperor at Thionville. Just as Queen Esther

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<sup>42</sup> Devisse, *Hincmar* pp. 74-86; *AB*, an 835, '*Ebo in plenaria sinodo capitale crimen confessus...*', p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> A point well made by Pauline Stafford in *Queens*, pp 11-12.



had remained faithful to her people in their time of need and risked the *ira* of her husband so the Empress Judith honoured her pledge to Ebo.

The act of intercession presupposes a decision by the patron to accept the plaintiff's cause. Judith could, after all, have ignored Framgaud's message and refused to intercede for Ebo. A queen is powerful because she has the freedom to decide whether she will act as a patron or refuse to present a cause to the king; it is the queen, not the king, who is the first judge of a suppliant's case.<sup>44</sup> A queen is not compelled to accept suits for mercy to be placed before the king. This is what made the perfect queenship exercised by Christ's mother in the heavenly court fundamentally different. The irresistible attraction of the queen of heaven was the certainty that she would not act in the manner of an earthly queen and refuse to present causes to her royal son, Christ.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the imperial aristocracy of Christ's *aula regis* could be relied upon not to misrepresent or traduce a plaintiff's case to their own personal advantage. For earthly queens such as Judith and the Frankish *palatini*, life was more complicated: their actions had political consequences. The empress had a choice as to whether or not to act on Ebo's behalf. Judith chose to receive the ring and present Ebo's cause which she must have known was unlikely to be well-received by the betrayed emperor. Yet there were, of course, other onlookers and a conciliatory act towards Ebo might reassure Lothar's partisans. Judith's intercession at Thionville defies the imposition of a dominant interpretation.

Ebo's office as archbishop of Rheims, his reputation as an intellectual amongst the Frankish clergy and his history of intimacy with the imperial couple meant that his removal as a patron would have had far reaching consequences. Lines of patronage and friendship in the royal household that had flowed through Ebo and out amongst

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<sup>44</sup> JC Parsons, 'The queen's intercession in thirteenth century England', in *Power of the weak: Essays in the history of medieval women*, eds., J Carpenter and S-B Maclean, University of Illinois (1995) pp 126-146.

<sup>45</sup> Ermold's plea to the Virgin, see above, chapter 3.



Frankish intellectuals were severed.<sup>46</sup> This provides another reason why there was likely to have been support amongst some of the Frankish clergy for his reinstatement. Ebo's fall from favour was also a loss for Judith, despite his recent attachment to Lothar, because she too was now denied access to Ebo and his connections. Alliances and networks of patronage had to be reformed and renewed. Yet the removal of Ebo also provided the opportunity for other intellectuals to press their claims. We can see Hrabanus, for example, carefully re-positioning himself to become more closely associated with Judith. Fulda was already a recipient of the emperor's patronage: during a visit with his first wife Irmengard (*ante* Nov 818) the emperor, observing (from the stench?) that the lamps in the abbey church were fuelled by animal fat, promised the monastery an olive grove in Italy.<sup>47</sup> It was on another visit to Fulda, probably in 832, that Hrabanus had presented Louis the Pious with a commentary on the book of Kings.<sup>48</sup> These ties with the emperor, and indeed the empress, were strengthened after 834 when Hrabanus was trusted with the politically sensitive task of being Ebo's gaoler at Fulda. From the surviving summaries of Fulda letters we learn that Hrabanus wrote to inform Judith, as well as Drogo and the emperor, about news from Italy that Lothar was planning Ebo's escape.<sup>49</sup> The presentation of his chapters on filial obligation and biblical commentaries to the emperor and empress was another sign of the abbot of Fulda's commitment to the imperial couple and would have done him no harm in the jockeying for position around them after their return to Aachen. It was after 834 that Hrabanus wrote to the empress concerning a *publica telonia* granted to Fulda by the emperor, a tollbooth or some kind of concession which allowed the house to collect tolls on trade. Disaster had struck in the form of Viking raids and the monks had lost the profits

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<sup>46</sup> That Ebo was at the centre of a scholarly network is suggested not least by the work Hrabanus did to restore him, Airlie, 'Bonds', pp. 200-203.

<sup>47</sup> MGH Epp. 5, p. 517.

<sup>48</sup> Sears, 'Louis the Pious', p. 621; de Jong, 'Hrabanus Maurus', p. 204.

<sup>49</sup> The letter to Judith does not survive but is listed in a Fulda register; Hrabanus also wrote on this matter to Marcward of Prum, Drogo, the archchaplain and the emperor, MGH Epp. 5, p. 518.

from the toll, probably in coin. This financial set back caused the monks of Fulda to seek Judith's help in restoring their property.<sup>50</sup> In 834, the palace annals reported that *Normanni* had entered Frisia, devastated part of the area and then had proceeded by way of Utrecht to the emporium of Dorestad which had been sacked.<sup>51</sup> Viking attacks on Frisia and the wealthy trading post of Dorestad became annual events in the mid 830s.<sup>52</sup> If the monks of Fulda had a toll at Dorestad and lost resources as the result of one of these raids then they would have experienced a considerable loss of revenue. Rights to collect tolls at Dorestad meant access to a steady stream of liquid wealth, the emporium was a centre of international trade and was already an important outlet for luxury goods before the Viking raids: indeed the return of the pirates year after year post 834 is testament to the volume of business and moveable wealth, including slaves, that passed through the settlement. Dorestad was particularly important in the trade in goods such as furs, high quality ceramics, glass and metal ornaments, all luxury items which satisfied the demands of the imperial court.<sup>53</sup> No wonder then that the 835 palace annal reported that the Viking raid on Dorestad in that year made the emperor very angry.<sup>54</sup> The queen's responsibility for the provisioning of the palace and her charge of the magnificence of the royal household would have given Judith an interest in the market in luxury items and, possibly, commerce at Dorestad. This might also explain why Hrabanus approached the empress to assist Fulda; perhaps the *publica telonia* had been granted originally through the patronage of the empress. Whatever his motive, Hrabanus recognised

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<sup>50</sup> *'Fuldense coenobium praeter alia bona etiam publica telonia habuit, ut apparet ex epistola abbatis Fuldensis ad iudith imperatoris coniugem. Telonea a Normannis ipsis erant erepta: quae ut restituantur, Iudith coniugem interim Ludovici sollicitant per epistolam'*, MGH Epp. 5, p. 518.

<sup>51</sup> *AB*, an 834, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, see the annals for 835, pp. 17-18; 836, p.19; 837, p. 21; 839, p. 34.

<sup>53</sup> A Verhulst, 'Economic organisation', in *NCMH II*, pp. 481-509, 507-9; WJH Verwers, 'Dorestad: a Carolingian town?', in *The rebirth of towns in the West*, eds. R Hodges and R Hobley, British Archaeological Reports, 68, (1988), pp. 52-56.

<sup>54</sup> *AB*, an 835, p. 17.



Judith as a patron with the power and influence to recompense the community for Viking depredations. But it is debatable in the straitened circumstances after 834 when there were so many other more pressing demands on the limited resources of both the emperor and the empress that Judith was able to make good Fulda's cash losses.

Men such as Ebo and Hrabanus are only high profile examples of changes in personnel and political relationships around the imperial couple. There was a much wider realignment of political interests and relationships than in the aftermath of the palace coup of 830. The retreat to Italy of Lothar and his leading supporters, and the flight north of *proceres* loyal to the imperial couple, had continuing political repercussions. As far as the emperor was concerned the expropriation of the Italian estates of Frankish churches, both St Denis and St Martin's, Tours for example had been generously endowed by Charlemagne after the conquest of Lombardy, was a critical issue in negotiations with Lothar.<sup>55</sup> Ratold, bishop of Verona, Count Boniface of Tuscany and Pippin, son of Bernard of Italy, had all forfeited estates in Italy when they had fled north with the empress.<sup>56</sup> Pippin was given lands between the Seine and the Meuse in the late 830s, maybe the countship of Beauvais.<sup>57</sup> The young Alemannian Ruadbern, Judith's rescuer from imprisonment in Tortona, would surely have expected the gratitude of the emperor and empress to be expressed in land and moveable wealth north of the Alps to make up for the loss of his Italian estates.<sup>58</sup> Judith was also a victim of Lothar's retreat to Italy. San Salvatore had constituted

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<sup>55</sup>J Jarnut, 'Ludwig der Fromme, Lothar I und das Regnum Italiae', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 349-362, at pp. 360-361. Other communities with Italian estates included St Gall, Reichenau, St Maurice d'Augune and Fulda, Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>56</sup>*AB*, an 836, p. 19.

<sup>57</sup>KF Werner, 'Untersuchungen zur Frühzeit des französischen Fürstentums, 9-10 Jht.', 5, *Die Welt als Geschichte* 20 (1960) pp. 87-119, at 92-94; Nithard, I, cap. .6, p. 26; II, cap. 3, p. 44.

<sup>58</sup> See above, chapter 6.



the major part of Judith's *dos*<sup>59</sup>, the considerable wealth of the house would have been a significant source of Judith's revenue.<sup>60</sup> A reference in Radbert's *Epitaphium* reveals that by the time of Wala's death in August 836 the convent was no longer under Judith's care but in the possession of Lothar's wife Irmengard. Judith had other resources which probably included Welf family estates in Alemannia and the *villa Mons*, in the county of Melun.<sup>61</sup> Add to this the fact that she seems to have had oversight or protection of some female monasteries. Thiathild of Remiremont, for example, when addressing the empress referred to the house as '*vestrum monasterium*'.<sup>62</sup> Judith was also an active patron of Hohenburg where Rotrude was abbess.<sup>63</sup> But the emperor did not, or more likely in the context of rebuilding political alliances post 834 could not, compensate his wife for the loss of San Salvatore.

The relationship between the empress and Remiremont may also have changed as a consequence of Lothar's retreat to Italy. Thiathild, whilst acknowledging that Judith had some ownership of the community appealed to Judith not to expropriate the monastery's estate at Châlon.<sup>64</sup> But then Remiremont was perhaps not alone in experiencing the fiscal rapacity of Judith's agents after 834. Frotharius of Toul also had cause to complain to the empress about the misappropriation of church resources. In a letter to Judith he implored her assistance in correcting the abuses of her *missi* in his diocese. These unidentified imperial agents had deprived churches in

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<sup>59</sup> Irmengard had received *dos* north of the Alps namely Erstein in Alsace, see above, chapter 2.

<sup>60</sup> See above, chapter 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Epitaphium*, II, cap. 24, p. 97; Tessier, 239, pp. 35-41, at p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> *Indicularius Thiathildis* 3-4, MGH Form., pp. 526-7

<sup>63</sup> See above, chapter 5.

<sup>64</sup> As note 62; the dating of the letter to the mid 830s is based on the similarity to another letter to her kinsman the seneschal Adlahard. See the comments of S.F.

the diocese of their resources as Frotharius put it, 'What had been decided was ours according to ecclesiastical decree, they decided otherwise'. Frotharius gave the example of the 'church of your priest' who had half his *mansus* and half his tithe taken from him and given to a layman which, as Frotharius spelt out, was 'against canon law, against the dignity of the church and our will'. The identity of Judith's priest in the diocese of Toul can only be wondered at, perhaps bungling *missi*, or over-zealous officials, had unwittingly expropriated the property of one of Judith's clerical protégés in the palace. Or, in order to make his case more strongly, Frotharius identified clergy of the diocese as under Judith's, and thus the emperor's, general protection. Frotharius expressed confidence that Judith would want him to put matters right: 'But we know what your command and wishes were, that they [the agents] should act with rectitude and justice and that nothing should be presumed against church dignity'. The letter closed with Frotharius asking Judith to give him the authority to amend their misdemeanours.<sup>65</sup>

Why were Judith's agents giving church property in the diocese of Toul to lay-men? An obstacle to the solution of this question lies in the fact the letter has not been dated any more accurately than between 826-840.<sup>66</sup> The tone of the letter, indeed the reference to knowing what Judith's wishes were in this matter, suggests that Frotharius was already on easy terms with the empress: early in 829 Frotharius had petitioned Judith's support in the election of the bishop of Sens.<sup>67</sup> This evidence, like Thiathild's complaint, cannot be assigned with precision to the period post 833. Yet, I suggest that there are reasons for linking the complaints of Thiathild and Frotharius with the period after Judith's return to the place 834. First, despite the fact that the appropriation of church property was a major preoccupation for both Agobard and

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Wemple on abbesses and management of their resources, *Women*, pp. 171-2, p. 296, with note 185.

<sup>65</sup> MGH Epp 5, ed K. Hampe, 29, pp. 295-6.

<sup>66</sup> K. Hampe, 'Zur Datierung der Briefe des Bischofs Frothar von Toul', *Neues Archiv*, XXI, (1896), pp. 747-760 at 758-59.

<sup>67</sup> See above, chapter 3



Radbert, neither of Judith's fiercest critics accused her of despoiling church property in either 830 or 833. Pauline Stafford has suggested that the most common charge made against a queen by her critics was the sin of avarice.<sup>68</sup> This deadly sin was not part of Agobard's catalogue of Judith's crimes in either the *Relatio* or the *LA*. More pertinently, after 833 Judith no longer enjoyed the revenues of San Salavatore. This means that she would have needed to look for new sources of revenue to enable her to continue to reward clients and followers in the palace. The acquisition of ecclesiastical lands and monies, in Toul or Chalon, for example, may have enabled her to maintain her activity as a patron. And, as we shall see, after her return to the palace in 834 Judith was establishing a network of friends and supporters not only for her own sake but for Charles the Bald. Significantly, Toul lay within the Belgic province which was granted to Charles the Bald in 838.

This curious letter of Frotharius, so frustrating in its lack of specific detail, reveals Judith in the mid-830s as a manager with officials or agents under her direction. There is further evidence of Judith's management of her own affairs: in April 838 a Le Mans source identified an individual called Altmar as Judith's seneschal.<sup>69</sup> A seneschal played an important role in the administration and organization of the itinerant royal household. In Adalhard's *DOP*, the seneschal is identified as one of the key officials within the palace: he had responsibility for the food and accommodation of the royal household and organised the imperial itinerary.<sup>70</sup> He also acted as a kind of liaison officer between itinerant household and the royal estates. The seneschal thus had a management role in the logistics of the itinerary but at the same time the office, like that of the chamberlain, involved privileged access to the emperor and empress and so created tremendous opportunities for patronage and the creation of a client base in the royal household. After 831, we know that the seneschal Adalhard was one

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<sup>68</sup> *Queens*, pp. 24-25

<sup>69</sup> 'Altmaro seneschalco Iudith imperatricis', *Gesta Aldrici*, eds., R Charles et L Froger, Mamers, (1889), p. 133

<sup>70</sup> *DOP*, cap. V, pp. 74--76, with note 169.



of the most powerful individuals at court as his intercessions in diplomas, including a joint petition with the empress, testify.<sup>71</sup> This chance reference to Judith's seneschal Altmar in 838 offers the earliest evidence for a queen with a household official of her own.

Who then, was Altmar? We cannot assign him confidently to a particular family yet the context in which Altmar comes to our attention suggests that he was a man of political significance and high social status who was trusted with the emperor's business.<sup>72</sup> Altmar acted as a *missus* with bishops Ebroin of Poitiers, Ercanrad of Paris, (who had presided over the *translatio* of Balthild's relics at Chelles five years earlier), and bishop Ebroin's kinsman, Rorgo, count of Maine: these four constituted the commission appointed by Louis the Pious at Aachen in April 838 to investigate the claims of Aldric of Le Mans to the monastery of St Calais.<sup>73</sup> The process of recovering the estates of the Le Mans diocese from lay control had begun at the time of Aldric's appointment in November 832.<sup>74</sup> According to the author of the *Gesta Aldrici*, the emperor and empress had been enthusiastic supporters of the former palace chaplain's endeavours. Altmar, then, like his fellow *missi*, was unlikely to have been hostile to Aldric and the Le Mans community and may even have had his own familial connections and estates in Neustria. Five months later at the *placitum* at Quiersy, in September 838 the judgement went in favour of Aldric and St Calais was

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<sup>71</sup> See above, chapter 5, for Adalhard's intercessions in diplomas.

<sup>72</sup> Depreux offers no suggestions for his family connections, *Prosopographie*, no 28, p. 101.

<sup>73</sup> Ebroin: on his career see O G Oexle, 'Bischof Ebroin von Poitiers und seine Verwandten', *FMS*, 3, (1969) pp.138-210, especially pp. 161-65; Depreux, *Prosopographie*, no. 79, pp. 174-76, the date of Ebroin's appointment at Poitiers is unknown but the earliest attestation of his episcopacy is April 838; Rorgo: *ibid.*, no 238, pp. 368-9; Werner, 'Bedeutende Adelsfamilien', p. 137ff; Ercanrad: see above, chapter 5 at note 74.

<sup>74</sup> See above, chapter 5.

restored to Le Mans. Judith, and Charles the Bald, archchaplain Drogo head the witness list of those present.<sup>75</sup>

Even from such slight evidence it is possible to make a case for Altmar as a trusted *palatinus* but how much importance should we read into his 'job title' as Judith's seneschal? First, the Le Mans author recognized Altmar as fulfilling the role of seneschal for the empress. Yet Altmar may have acted on an informal and *ad hoc* basis to suit Judith's needs. Earlier in the ninth century the capitulary *De Villis* had also envisaged the possible involvement of the queen in giving orders to the royal estates about foodstuffs.<sup>76</sup> This suggests that the existence of the queen's seneschal need not imply that Judith had a separate household. Judith would have had her own personal entourage consisting of servants and chaplains or clerics who would have accompanied her when she moved with the court from palace to palace. We know of an Alemannian woman who was Judith's personal servant: the empress took it on herself to recover the woman's free status which had been wrongly denied.<sup>77</sup> The imperial couple did not move everywhere together, military campaigns are a good example of when circumstances dictated separate household arrangements. There are several references which show that Judith moved independently of the emperor, sometimes at his direction, as in 824 when she met Louis the Pious at Rouen to receive the ambassadors from Constantinople.<sup>78</sup> In the early Spring of 830 when the emperor had moved to the northern coast to pray at the shrine of St Omer, Judith had remained at Aachen with the instructions to meet the emperor at Compiègne. In the event things had not gone according to plan: Judith was forced to flee from Aachen without the chamberlain Bernard and had to order Einhard to follow her on the

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<sup>75</sup> *Gesta Aldrici*, p. 147. Whilst the authenticity of this document has been questioned the witness list has been accepted as genuine, thus Goffart, *Le Mans*, p. 314.

<sup>76</sup> See above, chapter 1.

<sup>77</sup> MGH Form, 51, p. 324.

<sup>78</sup> *ARF*, an 824, p. 165.



road.<sup>79</sup> There may also have been occasional visits to the royal convents to manage resources. The nature of the sources does not allow us to construct a separate itinerary for Judith and there is no evidence that Altmar directed a household for Judith on anything like the scale described by abbot Adalhard in *DOP*.

The picture that emerges of Judith's position at court after 834 is of a queen at the centre of political networks, whom those beyond the court perceived to be both powerful and influential. The empress had certainly not returned to the palace as a spent force politically. Hrabanus and the community at Fulda identified the empress as a patron capable of restoring resources plundered by the Vikings; Frotharius, and possibly Thiathild, complained about the interference of Judith's officials or agents in their affairs. The existence of Judith's seneschal Altmar, suggests that she moved independently of the emperor often enough to have an official who was identified in other important contexts by his office. But perhaps the most telling piece of evidence for Judith's influence at court after 834 comes from the letters of an ambitious young intellectual with Fulda connections who identified the empress as a key patron at court, able to use her influence to get him started on what he hoped would be a glittering ecclesiastical career. Lupus, a bright star of the community at Ferrières, gives us an insight into how the patronage network of the court had to be negotiated if one wanted to 'get on'.<sup>80</sup> And in examining the experience of Lupus and his efforts to climb the greasy pole of Carolingian patronage it becomes clear that 'getting on' at court *circa* 836/7 meant 'getting on' with both the emperor and the empress. It is from Lupus that we find further testimony to the reputation of Judith in the mid 830s as a major powerbroker in the royal household.

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<sup>79</sup> See above, chapter 4.

<sup>80</sup> I rely here on the insights of Elizabeth Lockwood who comments that the 'letters reveal a whole web of patronage and clientage by which both official and personal business was conducted'. *Lupus of Ferrières*, unpublished Ph D thesis, University of London, (1992), pp. 199-204, at 199. I follow Lockwood's chronology for Lupus's career.



By 836 Judith had already shown herself to be a good friend to the community of Ferrières, the empress had been instrumental in securing the grant of St Judoc to the monastery which was an important source of revenues for the monks.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps it was only natural for a Ferrières man to look first to Judith for patronage at court. But Lupus was already well-connected in terms of his existing relationships amongst the intellectual elite of the Frankish church. His first patron had been abbot Aldric at Ferrières who had recognised his promise and sent him to study at Fulda with Hrabanus. Both Aldric and Hrabanus had themselves been students of Alcuin which meant that Lupus inherited a distinguished scholarly and spiritual pedigree. Lupus was at Fulda from about 831, returning to Ferrières only in 836, which means that he was there during the crises of the early 830s, the visit of the emperor and empress in 832, and the period of Ebo's imprisonment. Here was ample opportunity to observe and learn how Carolingian politics and the world of the court had a direct impact on the life of a monastic community. Shortly after his arrival at Fulda he had the self-confidence to approach Einhard, elder statesman of the Carolingian intellectual world, a great scholar, a great lord but above all an experienced politician in the ways of the imperial palace, to be his patron.<sup>82</sup> Marcward, abbot of Prüm was another *alumnus* of Fulda as well as being a relative of Lupus and assisted him on his homeward journey from Fulda in 836.<sup>83</sup> The patronage network that a young man like Lupus could activate in order to bring himself to the attention of the court is impressive. All his patrons had one thing in common: friendly connections with both the emperor and empress. The efforts of Hrabanus and Einhard obviously paid off, because shortly after his return from Fulda in the autumn of 836 Lupus was received at the court which was then probably at Frankfurt.<sup>84</sup> He wrote to his friend Reginbert that friends

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<sup>81</sup> ' *Religiosissimus imperator Hludowicus, vestrae nobilitatis auctor, ad petitionem gloriossimaе memoriae Judith Augustae, matris vestrae, cellam sancti Judoci monasterio Ferrariens contulit et suum donum praecepto firmavit* ', Lupus, I, no 42, p. 176.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84. I follow Lockwood's chronology for the visits of Lupus to the royal court, *Lupus of Ferrières*, pp. 167-8

at court had obtained an audience with the emperor for him and commented that he had been warmly received by the empress. Lupus had clearly made a good impression on Judith because a year later he was called to court by the empress herself. Writing in September 837, a time when Judith was more actively building a patronage network in West Francia, Lupus informed Reginbert excitedly that he was about to leave for the palace for a second meeting with the queen, 'who counts for a great deal'. Lupus and his friends were hoping that this visit would result in him receiving some position, perhaps even at court itself.<sup>85</sup> We don't know what passed between Judith and the young scholar at Aachen in the Autumn of 837 but Lupus was disappointed in his looked-for appointment.<sup>86</sup> Judith did not choose to, or was unable to, offer him advancement at this time. Lupus had, however, made a favourable enough impresssion on Louis and Judith and was to succeed his patron Odo as abbot at Ferrières in 840.

The early career of Lupus offers a case study in the getting of political and spiritual preferment. A young man needed backers at court and top drawer connections to bring him to the attention of the emperor and empress. (It is small wonder that Agobard, who distrusted all that the court stood for had achieved so little on his visits to court a decade earlier.) Lupus' letters suggest that the empress had her eye out for potential protégés, bright young scholars such as himself and indeed Walahfrid, the other outstanding young scholar of his generation, whose careers she wished to further. But what was in it for Judith? At a personal level perhaps she was genuinely interested in advancing young intellectuals, especially those with Alemannian connections, with whom she could exchange ideas and share scholarly interests. It is possible that Lupus was an Alemannian like herself. Another young Alemannian scholar, who counted both Lupus and Walahfrid in his circle of friends, was the good-looking and personable palace deacon, Bodo who had probably been in the palace

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<sup>85</sup> *'ad palatium, regina, quae plurimum valet, evocante, promoveo, multique existimant fore ut cito mihi gradus dignitatis aliquis conferatur.'* Lupus, I, p. 84.

<sup>86</sup> Lockwood suggests that Lupus's visit was to the court at Aachen after the return of the emperor from Nijmegen, as note 79.



since 823.<sup>87</sup> These bright young churchmen 'about the palace' were expected to mature into the bishops and abbots, the great ecclesiastical lords who controlled lands, monies and soldiers within the empire. Aldric's career and translation from royal household to the see of Le Mans offers another example. According to Walahfrid, it was the empress herself who had invited him to court to be tutor to Charles the Bald. In 838 when his young charge reached the age of manhood Walahfrid left the court after nearly a decade and returned home to Reichenau as abbot. (Perhaps it was young men like Bodo, Walahfrid and Aldric that Agobard had had in mind when he railed against Judith's 'games' with *clerici*.)<sup>88</sup> Of course the empress and emperor could also find themselves disappointed in their protégés: the apostasy of Bodo and his conversion to Judaism whilst on a pilgrimage to Rome scandalized the royal household in 839. According to Prudentius the emperor and empress were horrified by the news. Perhaps the scandal and betrayal was felt all the more keenly by a fellow *palatinus* such as Prudentius, who, after all, would have known Bodo intimately.<sup>89</sup>

It has already been suggested that one explanation for Judith's higher profile in the sources after 834 was the realignment of politics south of the Alps which placed pressure on resources available to both the emperor and empress. Indeed Judith may have become a more significant actor in politics at court because the emperor stood in need of faithful and loyal advisers and counsellors. But ultimately the context for Judith's increased visibility in the sources and participation in the disposal of patronage post 834 is to be found within the politics of the royal family itself which continued to be riven by conflict and potential violence. In many ways Agobard had hit the nail on the head when, in the *LA*, he had focused on generational conflict, the complaint of sons against their father and the *senior palatii*. Agobard's rhetoric justifying rebellion of sons against father was underpinned by the political fact that

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<sup>87</sup> Lupus, I, no 11, p. 82; Walahfrid dedicated a poem to his young friend, MGH Poetae II, p. 386; Fleckenstein, *Hofkapelle*, I, p. 58.

<sup>88</sup> Although Bodo was not a priest but a deacon.

<sup>89</sup> *AB*, an 839, pp. 27-8; H Löwe, 'Die Apostasie des Pfalzdiakons Bodo (838) und das Judentum der Chasaren', in, *Person und Gemeinschaft im Mittelalter*, eds., G



Irmengard's sons were old enough to be kings in their own right, indeed they had *regna* of their own, and to replace their father's regime. In the summer of 833 Agobard had described the ten-year-old Charles the Bald as a child which was a reason to condemn the oaths sworn to him in 832 as invalid and blasphemous. Charles would not remain a child for ever. Then there was the age gap between Louis and Judith which had been central to Agobard's attack on the emperor. In 834 Judith was about thirty, possibly younger, and belonged to a generation nearer in age to her stepsons than her husband. The disparity in the ages of emperor and empress and the fact that Judith had stepsons closer to her in age than her husband had always been part of the dynamic of her queenship. As the emperor grew older he had to cope with the ever-increasing demands for power from his adult sons whilst at the same time ensuring some kind of *regnum* for Charles the Bald. Louis' sons anticipated the day when they would have a greater share of their father's *regnum* and their expectations allowed them to develop political alliances among the aristocracy. But what kind of inheritance would her husband's death bring to Judith? The "last years" of Louis the Pious were unlikely to be the last years of Judith's life; but they would certainly be her last years as queen and empress. The lifespan of her queenship was determined by the life of her husband. The death of the emperor would be unlikely to augur the arrival of greater political power and resources for the empress. The ageing of the emperor was surely a factor in determining family politics in these years. Judith's queenship, her exercise of authority in the royal household, was conditioned by the fact that Louis the Pious was growing older. Her queenship can also be said to have 'aged' with the emperor. The pressures and demands on Judith, a younger second wife, changed as her husband grew older and her son approached adulthood. This meant that Judith, like the leading men at court, and like her stepsons, needed more urgently than before to form relationships that stretched into the future, beyond the death of the emperor. After 834, Judith may have increasingly seized the opportunity to strike out on her own in forging alliances that would bring this about.

The emperor's pursuit of a lasting settlement with Lothar in the aftermath of 833/4 is a major preoccupation of the palace-based annals of Prudentius in the years 834-40. Any settlement with Lothar concerned the emperor's renewed plans for the endowment of Charles the Bald with a portion of the *regnum* and an accommodation of the aspirations of Pippin of Aquitaine and Louis the German as well as with Lothar. The active involvement of Judith in seeking a settlement with Lothar and the securing of an inheritance for Charles the Bald during these years is emphasised in two narrative sources both written shortly after the death of Louis the Pious in the early 840s, a period when the empress was active in the military defence of her son's inheritance. The first is the Astronomer's biography of the emperor, the second is Book I of Nithard's history.

According to the Astronomer it was Judith, with the support of an unnamed group of counsellors, who in 835 was instrumental in persuading the emperor to make yet another overture to his recalcitrant son.

'Judith Augusta, with the emperor's counsellors, took the initiative since it seemed that although he was in good health the emperor's physical strength might deteriorate. If he should die then this would imperil herself and Charles unless one of his elder brothers should take their part. Realising that none of the emperor's sons was as suited to this as Lothar they (ie Judith and the counsellors) urged the emperor to send peace envoys to him and invite him to discuss this.'<sup>90</sup>

Judith's lead in initiating contact and negotiations with Lothar in the winter of 835/836 is related only by the Astronomer. Yet, it is extremely unlikely that the empress was the driving force behind negotiations with Lothar in 835/6. Louis the

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<sup>90</sup> *'Augusta Iudith cum consiliaris imperatoris inito consilio, eo quod valentia, ut videbatur, imperatoris corpus destitueret, et si mors ingrueret, et sibi et Karolo periculum immineret, nisi aliquam fratrum sibi adscisserentur, coniectantesque nullum filiorum imperatoris tam convenientem huiusce rei sicut Hlotharium, hortati sunt imperatorem, ut ad eum missos pacificos mitteret et ad hoc ipsum invitaret...'*, Astron, cap. 54, pp. 504-506.



Pious did not need cajoling into action by his wife and a mysterious group of unidentified counsellors in the palace: Prudentius reports that during the celebration of Christmas at Aachen in 835 the emperor sent yet another (*iterum*) delegation to Lothar in Italy urging him to send envoys to negotiate a settlement.<sup>91</sup> The Astronomer hints in this passage at the prospect of the emperor's *future* physical decline rather than current health problems, and Louis the Pious gave no impression of failing health at this time - he remained an enthusiastic huntsman and leader of armies against troublesome sons and Viking raiders. Nithard suggests that the emperor only began to deteriorate physically as late as 839 and only then does he see Judith, for very similar reasons, urging a rapprochement with Lothar.<sup>92</sup> Why then, does the Astronomer place Judith at the centre of a party in the royal household who were actively seeking to come to terms with Lothar as early as 835? The inaccuracy of the biographer's dating post 835 has been noted by historians: the Astronomer worked closely from a copy of the royal annals up until 835, from then on, without the framework of the annals, his chronology tends to go awry.<sup>93</sup> What this means is that he may have read the conditions of 839, when the emperor's health may indeed have given cause for alarm and a settlement with Lothar was urgent, back into 835/36.<sup>94</sup> Muddled and unreliable in terms of his political chronology he may have been, yet the Astronomer was surely correct in placing Judith at the centre of political relationships within the imperial household.

The empress may not have played a leading role in achieving a meeting with Lothar in 836 but she certainly had interests at stake. On the agenda for discussion at the projected meeting with Lothar's embassy at Thionville was Lothar's expropriation of the Italian estates and resources of Frankish churches and loyal followers of the

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<sup>91</sup> '*Imperator missos iterum ad Hlotharium direxit...*', *AB* an 836, pp. 20-21.

<sup>92</sup> Nithard, I, cap. 6, p. 28.

<sup>93</sup> See above, Introduction.

<sup>94</sup> As suggested by Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p.98.



emperor north of the Alps. According to Prudentius, this was a contentious issue which remained to be settled politically.<sup>95</sup> Judith's interest in these negotiations was twofold; she presumably looked for the restoration of her *dos* San Salvatore, Brescia but she also had a role as advocate for her Italian rescuers in 834, namely Pippin, bishop Ratold and count Boniface. Louis and Judith received Lothar's envoys abbot Wala, Eberhard count of Friuli, and Richard, Lothar's *ostiarius*, at the palace of Thionville in May 836.<sup>96</sup> The Astronomer emphasises the joint role of the imperial couple at Thionville commenting that abbot Wala was received with particular cordiality by Louis *and Judith* 'who wanted with great eagerness and kindness of heart to be reconciled first to Wala himself, remitting whatever transgressions he had committed against them'.<sup>97</sup> (Incidentally, Wala's role as pragmatic political negotiator in 836 was omitted by his biographer Radbert in the 850s because it did not fit with a vision of the abbot as an heroic and uncompromising spiritual leader persecuted by a cruel and vengeful queen.) There was a further reason for the particular interest of the empress in this meeting with Lothar's envoys. For Eberhard, the trusted aide and negotiator for Lothar, achieved a rare political coup even for a leading member of the imperial aristocracy, namely marriage with princess Gisela, only daughter of Louis the Pious and Judith.

Little is known of Eberhard's career before he came to Thionville in May 836 but his family had a long history of service to the Carolingians. His role as Lothar's ambassador did not mark the family's entrance into the Frankish politics on a scale empire-wide but their ability to survive at such dangerous political altitudes from one reign to the next. Unroch, Eberhard's father, had been one of the leading men at Charlemagne's court, a close associate of abbot Wala and one of the witnesses to the

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<sup>95</sup> *AB*, an 836, p.21.

<sup>96</sup> Thegan *continuatio*, pp. 254-6.

<sup>97</sup> *Astron*, cap 55, p. 506.

old emperor's will.<sup>98</sup> The family had landed resources scattered across the Carolingian realm; these included estates in north-west France and the family monastery of St Bertin, allods on the lower Rhine, a parcel of land in Alemannia and of course in Eberhard's time the march of Friuli.<sup>99</sup> This was an important benefice but it is not known whether Eberhard succeeded Baldric immediately as one of the new officers appointed to the marches in 828. Eberhard's allegiance during the rebellion of 833, like that of the greater part of the Frankish nobility, is unrecorded. Curiously, Eberhard was described as *fidelis* by Thegan's continuator which may suggest that he had not followed Lothar in 833.<sup>100</sup>

When did Eberhard marry Gisela? In the absence of concrete evidence historians have argued for a variety of possible dates between c836 and c839.<sup>101</sup> The mid-ninth century Ravenna historian Agnellus insisted that Gisela was married in her father's lifetime, that is before 6th June 840.<sup>102</sup> Poetry dedicated to Eberhard by Sedullius strongly suggests that Eberhard and Gisela had two sons who were born before the death of the emperor.<sup>103</sup> Their eldest child, however, may have been a daughter, Engeltrude.<sup>104</sup> Working on the assumption that Gisela experienced three consecutive

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<sup>98</sup> *Vita Karoli*, cap. 33, p. 41; *ARF* an 811, p. 12; for Eberhard's family and Unruoch's career see E. Favre, 'La famille d'Evrard marquis de Frioul dans le royaume franc de l'ouest', in *Études d'histoire du moyen âge dédiées à Gabriel Monod*, ed. E. Lavissee, Paris (1896) pp. 155-62; Werner, 'Bedeutende Adelsfamilien', Exkurs I, in *Karl der Grosse*, vol I, pp. 133-137.

<sup>99</sup> For Eberhard's career see Hlawitschka, *Franken*, pp. 169-72.

<sup>100</sup> Thegan, p. 256.

<sup>101</sup> Werner suggested c. 836, 'Die Nachkommen', p. 447; more recently Janet Nelson has argued for 839, *Charles the Bald*, p. 100.

<sup>102</sup> 'Gisla filiam suam tradidit marito Evrado nomine', *Liber pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SRL p. 389.

<sup>103</sup> MGH, Poetae 3, 37-38, pp. 201-2.

<sup>104</sup> In a charter for Cysoing, Gisela listed her children thus: *Hengeltrude, Hunroc, Berengario, Adelardo, Rodulpho, Hellwich, Gilla, Judich*, which suggests that she was naming them in birth order, De Coussemaker, no 6, p. 11.



pregnancies, March 837 is the last possible date for the marriage. Yet the biology of the female body is ultimately of limited use in explaining this marriage alliance: the political context for the marriage is surely to be found in the meeting with Eberhard and the emperor and empress at Thionville 836.

In her study of the marriages of Charles the Bald to Ermentrude and Richildis, Jane Hyam argued that both alliances arose from particular and immediate political circumstances where the support of the woman's family was crucial. Once these circumstances had changed the political advantages which had accrued from the match soon evaporated.<sup>105</sup> This was just as true for the marriages of royal daughters. They could be used as assets to win aristocratic support but such gains were not always long term. Royal women carried blood claims to royal fisc outside the family and established cadet lines of the dynasty with a fierce sense of their Carolingian ancestry among the aristocracy. The aristocratic families Carolingian women married into usually achieved an increase in royal patronage through these alliances. Once built up at the time of the marriage when their favour was courted it was then hard to cut them down to size. In his biography of Charlemagne, Einhard had felt the need to explain why the emperor had kept his daughters with him in the royal household and did not allow them to leave the court to marry.<sup>106</sup> Yet Charlemagne's unmarried daughters may not have been such an oddity because Gisela appears to have been the only daughter of Louis the Pious who married. Indeed, Pauline Stafford has commented that marriage to anyone in the mid-ninth century was still rare for a Carolingian woman.<sup>107</sup>

Gisela was a precious family asset and her marriage could be used to bolster her parents' strategy for the endowment of Charles the Bald. A major consideration for

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<sup>105</sup> 'Ermentrude and Richildis', in *Court and Kingdom*, pp. 154-68, at p. 157.

<sup>106</sup> *Vita Karoli*, cap. 19, p. 25.

<sup>107</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 100; Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', p. 143.



the emperor and empress was Eberhard's family connections in north west France, his brother was abbot of the wealthy abbey of St Bertin. St Bertin, like Toul and Ferrières, lay within the Belgic Provinces - a region that was to be at the heart of the portion of Charles the Bald. The emperor was prepared to further enhance Eberhard's territorial base in this area through the generous dowry of imperial fiefs, most probably the Flemish estates of Cysoing, Anappes, Somain and Vitry that accompanied his daughter's hand.<sup>108</sup> In the event the emperor's projected meeting with Lothar and his men at Worms in September had to be postponed because his son was ill. The marriage alliance of Gisela and Eberhard, which was probably negotiated, if not celebrated, at Thionville, was however surely one successful outcome for both Louis and Judith.<sup>109</sup> Gisela's marriage to Eberhard was of huge political significance as it represented the 'seduction', as a ninth-century commentator might see it, or winning over of one of Lothar's key Italian magnates to the emperor. The price of Eberhard's future loyalty was the tranche of imperial fiefs in Flanders. What was Judith's role in this marriage alliance? One can see that the marriage of Gisela into a family with empire-wide resources and a strong allodial base in north-west France, was part of a long term strategy to secure the foundations for a settlement on Charles the Bald and guarantee of her future.

A year later during the Christmas celebrations at Aachen in 837, Louis the Pious granted his youngest son the greater part of the territories known as the Belgic provinces.<sup>110</sup> According to the Astronomer this was a decision that had been strongly urged by the empress and a group of leading men in the royal household and the nobility in the empire at large yet whilst Judith's interest is clear in this settlement

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<sup>108</sup> For Gisela's dowry, see above, chapter 2.

<sup>109</sup> According to Thegan's continuator the imperial couple, accompanied by their children, were at Coblenz on 19th-21<sup>st</sup> November 836 for the *translatio* of St Castor, p.256.

<sup>110</sup> *AB*, an 837, pp. 22-26; Nithard I, cap. 6, pp. 24-6

on her son we do not have to accept that the emperor needed any heavy persuasion to act.<sup>111</sup> The boundaries are described in detail by Nithard:

'the whole of Frisia from the North Sea and Saxon frontier as far as the frontier of the Ripuarian Franks, and along the latter, the counties of of Mulekewe, Ettra, Harmalant and Maasgau; then all the territory between the Meuse and the Seine as far south as Burgundy, including Verdun; and going on from Burgundy, the counties of Toul, Ornois, Blois, Blaisois, Perthois, the two Bars [i.e. Bar-le-Duc and Bar-sur-Aube], Brienne, Troyes, Auxerre, Sens, the Gatinais, Melun, Etampes, the Pays de Chartres, and Paris; then along the Seine to the Channel and up the coast as far as Frisia again'.<sup>112</sup>

Although the grant was not made formally before an assembly those bishops, counts, abbots and vassals present who held benefices in this area swore oaths of fidelity to Charles. Only the theologically-minded might quibble that oaths to a child, for Charles was not fifteen until the following June, were invalid.<sup>113</sup> The festival of Christ's birth when many of the leading men of the empire might assemble at Aachen for the celebrations was a solemn occasion for this announcement. In 832 when Louis had attempted to impose the child Charles as king of Aquitaine in place of Pippin the outcome was armed rebellion. This time the emperor, and his wife, had prepared the 'aristocratic and family' ground more carefully in the area over the previous three or four years. The envoys of Louis the German and Pippin were present at Aachen and according to the *AB*, gave their assent<sup>114</sup>. The Belgic provinces were rich in resources - royal fisci, benefices, the relics and shrines of saints, powerful abbots and abbesses

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<sup>111</sup> '*Interea Iudith Augusta consilii, quod pridem consiliariis aulicis ceterisque regni Francorum nobilibus inierat, nequaquam immemor, persuaserunt imperatoris...*', Astron, cap. 59, p. 528

<sup>112</sup> Translated by Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 94

<sup>113</sup> Thus Agobard complaining about the oaths to Charles in 832. See above, chapter 6.

<sup>114</sup> *AB*, an 837, p. 24.



too, not to mention the bishops and counts. We know of two *proceres* from the Paris region who commended themselves to Charles the Bald: count Gerald, brother of the seneschal Adalhard, and Hilduin abbot of the royal monastery of St Denis.<sup>115</sup> Judith's family connections also made a contribution: his Welf kin bolstered the claims of Charles in his new territory. His uncle Conrad had married Adelaide, the daughter of count Hugh probably some time between 834-838 an alliance which brought him lands near Auxerre.<sup>116</sup> It was not until 839, however, that Conrad seems to have been granted a countship in his homeland of Alemannia. The convent at Chelles, ruled by his grandmother abbess Heilwig, contained the shrine of the royal saint Balthild whose relics were now working miracles. And significantly the endowment of Charles came after the emperor had invested in the support of Eberhard of Friuli, north east of the Seine through the marriage with Gisela and her rich dowry of estates. Judith's interest in the marriages of Conrad and Gisela to families with resources within the kingdom of Charles the Bald can be surmised. But the wealth of the northern coastal strip made the territory vulnerable: from 834 the emporium and mint at Dorestad suffered annual raids from the Northmen as the monks of Fulda knew only too well. This small realm was a hard proving ground for a young prince - one that needed defending from the Vikings and the jealousies of his brothers.

The outcome of the endowment of Charles was conflict but although Lothar may have plotted with Louis the German about leading an army into Francia he remained south of the Alps.<sup>117</sup> In mid-August 838 at the assembly at Quiersy - which lay within the new territory of Charles the Bald - the emperor conferred a more substantial and significant portion of the Carolingian realms on his youngest son, Neustria. The fifteen-year-old was given the weapons of manhood, that is a sword-belt, the crucial

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<sup>115</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald* on the importance of this region and its wealth pp. 94-95; in 830 the emperor had visited the northern coast to pray at the shrines of the saints: *AB*, an 830, p. 1.

<sup>116</sup> Nelson, 'Last years', p. 152; for Conrad and Adelaide's connections with Auxerre see J Wollasch, 'Das *patrimonium Beati Germani* in Auxerre', in *Studien und Vorarbeiten*, pp. 185-224.

<sup>117</sup> *AB*, an 838, p. 26.



sign of adult male status in the secular world.<sup>118</sup> He also received a crown, a detail offered by Nithard to underline the kingly authority and status legitimately conferred on Charles by his imperial father.<sup>119</sup> Judith was now the mother of a king, the ultimate accolade for a queen. The significance of a Neustrian kingdom was that it was historically associated with the eldest son in the royal family. In the previous generation Charlemagne had assigned Neustria to *his* eldest son Charles who had been marked out as his father's ultimate heir to the Frankish realms. Possession of the kingdom of Neustria, since Louis the Pious had not conferred the realm previously on Lothar, thus gave Charles the Bald 'special status within the family'.<sup>120</sup> Judith had achieved an extraordinary honour for her son and one that set him apart from his brothers. The wonder is that Pippin of Aquitaine agreed to this endowment and all it implied for his younger brother unless he had already abandoned all aspirations of his own to a share of the Carolingian realm. He died before the end of the year on 13th December.<sup>121</sup> If Neustria can be said to have had a capital it was Le Mans, the 'boulevard de Neustrie' where bishop Aldric, a close friend and supporter of the imperial couple, ruled<sup>122</sup>. Significantly, it was whilst the court remained at Quiersy in September that St Calais was formally restored to bishop Aldric.

Charles the Bald had his own itinerant household, although as yet he lacked a wife and queen, and on leaving the assembly at Quiersy made his way directly to Aldric's seat at Le Mans: the support of his parents' friends and allies in the west was to be crucial. The emperor and empress left their son and departed for Paris to visit the 'shrines of the saints' before meeting Charles at Attigny. The goodwill of the saints associated with the ancient Merovingian capital and its environs - Denis, Germain,

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>119</sup> Nithard 1, cap. 6, p. 26.

<sup>120</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 97

<sup>121</sup> On Pippin's death and burial at Ste Croix, Poitiers, see above, chapter 5.

<sup>122</sup> P. Le Maitre, 'L'oeuvre d'Aldric du Mans et sa signification (832-857)', *Francia*, 8, (1980), pp. 43-64.

Genevieve and of course Balthild - and the churchmen and women who guarded their relics were also needed to support and assist the region's new ruler. Charles spent Christmas with his parents at Mainz .<sup>123</sup> He remained under their close supervision and direction.

The price of a kingdom for Charles in the west was the emperor's resumption of royal estates east of the Rhine. After the celebration of Epiphany the emperor and empress crossed the Rhine and began 839 at the palace of Frankfurt where Charles had been born. However, the young Louis attempted to prevent his father crossing the Rhine and surrounded the palace at Frankfurt but the old emperor responded by sending a general summons out to his *fideles* east of the Rhine and forced his son to back down.<sup>124</sup> For the first time in the reign the imperial itinerary included a visit to Alemannia, which meant that after twenty years Judith returned to her homeland; in April 839 Louis and Judith were resident at the royal vill at Bodman on the shores of Lake Constance.<sup>125</sup> The stay at Bodman marked a new departure in the imperial itinerary as it had never been visited by Charlemagne. Yet Alemannia had been marked out in 829 as the portion for Charles the Bald, a plan long since abandoned. Louis the Pious now made use of Judith's family connections: in 839 her brother Conrad replaced Ruacher as count in this area<sup>126</sup>. The visit to Bodman was a warning to Louis the German to stay out of Alemannia and a show of strength and support for Conrad in his new countship. Judith had her own resources in Alemannia, estates which had come to her in 819 as part of her 'Welf' dowry or had been inherited from her family.<sup>127</sup> It could be argued that if Louis the Pious had lived then Alemannia may have become a regular part of the imperial itinerary in the 840s.

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<sup>123</sup> *AB*, an 838, p. 26.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *AB*, an 839, p. 27.

<sup>126</sup> Borgolte, *Grafen*, pp. 165-6, 210.

<sup>127</sup> See above, chapter 2.



In the Spring of 839, the emperor was sixty years old, and his age and failing health may now indeed have given Judith and leading men around him in the palace cause for concern in the absence of a negotiated settlement with Lothar. We can only guess at the identity of these shadowy and unnamed counsellors but they surely included men such as archchaplain Drogo, the seneschal Adalhard, bishops Ebroin and Aldric and count Conrad all of whom, bar Drogo, had interests west of the Rhine. For Nithard a settlement with Lothar was a matter of urgency in the Spring of 839.<sup>128</sup> The Astronomer saw Judith and her allies at court continuing the initiative begun four years earlier. The emperor received Lothar at Worms on 30th May and was reconciled to his sons and his supporters. A detailed survey of the realm was made and a division into two equal shares, Bavaria excepted. Lothar was given the choice of whichever share he preferred, and chose the 'eastern' share which included the kingdom of Italy, the imperial capital of Aachen and the rich concentration of Carolingian fisc between the Meuse and Moselle. The western share envisaged retention of the possessions already granted to Charles: the major significant addition was the kingdom of Aquitaine, Gascony and the Spanish March. When both sons had sworn obedience to their father for the remainder of his life, for this was a prospective division like that between Charlemagne's sons in 806, Lothar returned to Italy.<sup>129</sup> He was to remain there until after his father's death twelve months later. The agreement at Worms effectively disinherited the sons of Pippin I and excluded Louis the German from Francia.<sup>130</sup>

Like all the previous written divisions of the Frankish realms the division of 839 was not any kind of peace treaty. Aquitaine had to be fought for and here Charles received the backing of both his parents. Bishop Ebroin of Poitiers was a key agent of the emperor's will in the region directing and organising resistance to the

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<sup>128</sup> Nithard I, cap 6, p. 28.

<sup>129</sup> *AB*, an 839, for details of the division see pp. 36-38.

<sup>130</sup> Astron, caps. 60-61, pp. 532-5 for the grievances of Louis the German.



Aquitanian supporters of Pippin II.<sup>131</sup> Charles also had vital support from other leading men in his new kingdom including the two sons-in-law of Pippin I namely Count Gerard, commander of the garrison of Limoges and Count Ratherius. The emperor called a general assembly for 1st September 839 near Chalon to assemble the host and, after Charles had received the loyalty of a section of the Aquitanian aristocracy, he directed an army against Pippin II and his supporters. Charles did not get the opportunity to lead an army beside his father on the strenuous campaign against the stronghold at Carlat but was sent ahead with Judith to join Ebroin at Poitiers.<sup>132</sup> Here we have the first reference to Judith acting jointly with her son, but in what capacity? The empress had considerable political experience and could assist Charles in running his household, her seneschal Altmar may also have been of use. Poitiers was to be the base for his rule in Aquitaine and here he could rely on the assistance of bishop Ebroin and the organisational expertise of his mother. If Louis the Pious was failing physically in early 839 as both the Astronomer and Nithard agree, then the emperor's actions in personally directing the defence of his son's kingdom, that same kingdom of Aquitaine he had ruled for many years before succeeding his father as emperor, provide us with no corroborative evidence. The emperor joined his wife and son at Poitiers where they celebrated Christmas with their friend and supporter bishop Ebroin. This was to be the last time the family were together.<sup>133</sup>

The emperor left Poitiers in February to oppose the rebellion of Louis the German. Judith and Charles remained in Aquitaine with Ebroin.<sup>134</sup> Whilst in arms against his son the emperor became ill and died on 20th June 840 on an island in the Rhine, within sight of the palace at Ingelheim the setting for the magnificent display of the beneficence of his regime during the celebrations for the baptism of Herold and his

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<sup>131</sup> Astron, cap. 61, p. 536.

<sup>132</sup> *AB*, an 839, pp. 40-41.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, an 840, p. 42

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

family in 826.<sup>135</sup> The Astronomer seems to offer an eye-witness account of the last days of the emperor: his was not an easy or gentle death. His faithful brother Drogo, archbishop of Metz, gave him communion and apparently persuaded the emperor, with some difficulty to forgive the transgressions of his namesake, Louis the German. Charles and Judith, far away in Aquitaine were in his thoughts, as he divided his treasure and possessions. The crown and sword were sent to Lothar but 'on condition that he should keep his faith to Judith and Charles and guarantee to Charles the whole share of the realm which with God and the leading men of the palace as witnesses, Lothar with his father, and in his father's presence had assigned to Charles'.<sup>136</sup> The emphasis of the Astronomer on Lothar's pledge to Judith *and* Charles jointly, reveals the biographer's preoccupations as much as those of the emperor on his deathbed. The interests of Judith were identified as coinciding with those of her son; Lothar had obligations to both of them and Lothar's rightful possession of the symbols of royal authority, the crown and sword, were made conditional on fulfilling promises towards his stepmother and half-brother. This speaks volumes for the political status of the empress at the end of the reign in 840. In 834 Judith had returned to the palace after a year's exile and imprisonment, separated from her husband and children. She had not been crowned beside her husband in 835 although her status as queen was restated by Hrabanus who opposed the attack on her exercise of queenship by Agobard. By the time of Louis' death six years later Judith had seen her only son achieve the status of manhood and, in 839, be recognized by his father as the co-heir to Francia with his elder brother. However, by the time the Astronomer was writing his biography, probably within the year of the old emperor's death, both Judith and Charles the Bald were actively engaged in the military defence of his inheritance from that brother's aggression. That he had a substantial inheritance to defend, Charles owed to the political acumen of his mother as well as his father.

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<sup>135</sup> *AB*, an 840, p. 42; Nithard, I, cap. 8, p. 34.

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136 *‘...ut fidem Karolo et Iudith servaret et portionem regni totam illi consentiret et tueretur, quam Deo teste et proceribus palatii ille secum et ante se largitus ei fuerat.’*  
Astron, caps. 63-64, pp. 546-52



## Chapter 8

### *Mother and son*

840-843

Death is unexpected, even for an ageing emperor whose male kin have spent most of their adult lives in preparation for the event. Judith and the sons of Louis the Pious were not to know that the emperor would die on 20th June 840 whilst returning from his campaign east of the Rhine. It was purely chance that Judith was not with her husband when he died. Judith's separation from Louis in June 840 meant that she did not have charge of her husband's body and therefore had no power to control or influence the rituals surrounding the emperor's death and burial. This role fell to Drogo, the archchaplain, who had custody of his imperial brother's body and managed the funeral rites. Drogo, of all family members, would have been alive to the opportunities presented by the possession of his brother's remains: as a young boy he had probably witnessed the burial of his father Charlemagne at Aachen by the children of his concubines, now it was his turn to assert his membership of the Carolingian family. In death Louis the Pious, who had actively promoted a vertical model of the imperial family which privileged his legitimate sons, was reclaimed as a member of the wider Carolingian and Arnulfing kin group. The nuclear family created by marriage seemed to be set aside. Drogo did not transfer the emperor's body to Aachen to lie beside their father in the imperial chapel but to his episcopal see of Metz and the church of St Arnulf, a more ancient cult centre of the Carolingians and the place where Louis's mother, queen Hildegard was buried.<sup>1</sup> Drogo placed the emperor's body in the Roman sarcophagus (perhaps the brothers had discussed this) which was decorated with scenes from the crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>2</sup> In 814 Charlemagne's children, and other members of the wider kin had attempted to use this time to negotiate with the new heir, seeking to retain resources and a measure of political

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<sup>1</sup> Hildegard's death and burial, Astron, cap. 64, p. 554.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the sarcophagus, see Melzak, 'Antiquarianism', pp. 629-40; on Metz and the Carolingians see O G Oexle, 'Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heilige Arnulf', *FMS* 1, (1967) pp. 250-364

power.<sup>3</sup> Judith's absence from her husband's household meant that it was Drogo and the other *primores* who attended the last rites of the emperor at Metz, and who carried out his last wishes, dividing the imperial treasure and distributing what they thought were the appropriate shares to his sons.<sup>4</sup> We know from the Astronomer that this treasure was considerable and included weapons as well as imperial regalia.<sup>5</sup> Denied the ability to control the news or the resources, it was left to Judith, far away in Aquitaine, to react to the death of her husband.

The death of the emperor marked a profound change in Judith's life, she was now a widow and this had implications for her status and identity. Judith had been empress because she was the wife of the emperor: this had been the basis of her power in the imperial household. With the death of her husband Judith's queenship lost its grounding in a reciprocal conjugal relationship. The biblical symbolism of king and queen as a married couple which had been used by Agobard and Hrabanus in the 830s was no longer appropriate. Judith was not the wife of the emperor but mother of a young king fighting to win a share of his father's inheritance. This was a different kind of relationship. Charles was a king even though as a child he had been under the authority of the empress, his mother. Whilst Charles remained unmarried Judith might have hoped to continue in her role as queen. This dowager queenship was exercised at a time of political emergency for Charles the Bald when the political acumen and management experience of his mother the empress was surely an asset in his conflict with Lothar.

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<sup>3</sup> Charlemagne's cousin Wala had been suspected of not greeting the new emperor with open arms, Astron, cap 21, pp. 346-8 with Nelson, 'Monstrous Regiment', pp.240-41.

<sup>4</sup> For the emperor's funeral, Astron, cap 64, p. 554; Nithard I, cap 8, pp. 34-6; *AF* an 840. For a recent discussion of the funeral of Louis the Pious, see Nelson, 'Carolingian royal funerals', pp. 155-160 where she suggests that Louis and Judith may have envisaged Metz as a Carolingian mausoleum.

<sup>5</sup> Astron, cap 63, p. 548.



The structure and politics of the Carolingian family in 840, the fact that Judith was a second wife and the mother of the youngest male heir, also shaped her position. Charles the Bald was already a king before his father's death but he did not inherit his father's imperial title or the imperial palace of Aachen. Judith was not the mother but the step-mother of the new emperor, Lothar; the new empress was Irmengard, Lothar's wife. The senior empress retained her title and imperial status in the eyes of some: two of Judith's contemporaries namely Gerward, the former librarian of the imperial palace, and Agnellus, archbishop of Ravenna, identified her as *imperatrix* after 840.<sup>6</sup> Yet the death of the emperor had the effect of evicting her from 'imperial space'. Irmengard would now occupy Judith's place in the imperial palaces of Aachen, Ingelheim, and Frankfurt where Judith had given birth to Charles the Bald. Charlemagne's palace of Aachen, the *sedes regni*, theatre of imperial ritual and display would now be closed to her. Judith's sphere of influence and power had changed both politically and geographically and now depended on the ability of Charles the Bald to defend the portion awarded him by his father in 839. In the next twelve months his mother proved to be one of his most valuable supporters in the winning of his realm.<sup>7</sup>

The political situation that confronted Charles the Bald and Judith at the death of Louis the Pious was dangerous and uncertain. The legitimate sons of two different marriages were in conflict for the Frankish heartlands. The territorial settlement between Lothar and Charles the Bald of 839, the culmination of Judith's political work to secure an inheritance for her son, turned out to be too recent and contentious a project to stand the strain of 840. The process of establishing networks of support to underpin this latest, and controversial, *divisio* was still in progress<sup>8</sup>. The emperor had faced opposition to its terms for the last twelve months of his life. He had died returning from the campaign against the young Louis and, while Charles was still in

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<sup>6</sup> For Agnellus see below, note 48; Gerward, see below, note 75

<sup>7</sup> See Stafford, *Queens*, on queen-mothers and succession politics, pp. 146-48, 152-65.

<sup>8</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 105-114.



Aquitaine. Here, the rule of Charles the Bald had been opposed by Pippin II since 839<sup>9</sup>. The death of Louis the Pious precipitated a scramble for Francia amongst his heirs which created conflicts of loyalties for magnates who held lands from different lords.

The sources for this period are uneven. The Astronomer's life of the emperor written shortly after his death does not cover the period after June 840, but as we have seen, the biographer does award Judith an increasingly active role in the last years of the reign. The annals of Prudentius contain no information about Judith after the death of the emperor. Indeed the lack of detail about the movements of Charles in the annals for 840 and 841 may indicate that Prudentius was with the imperial household in June 840 and inclined to Lothar's side until mid-841.<sup>10</sup> Judith does not appear as an intercessor in any of the surviving diplomas issued by Charles between June 840 and April 843.<sup>11</sup> This means that we are largely dependent on one major source for Judith's career after 840: Nithard. Fortunately, Nithard's history is the single most detailed source for the years 840-843. Like Drogo, a member of the wider Carolingian family and, like Charles the Bald, also a grandson of Charlemagne, Nithard had declared his allegiance to the young king by July 840 when he was sent as an envoy to Lothar.<sup>12</sup> Nithard proved his loyalty again in the Autumn of 840 when Lothar crossed the Meuse: he chose to keep his oath to his lord, Charles the Bald, and saw his lands in the Charbonnière region fall to Lothar.<sup>13</sup> As we shall see these

<sup>9</sup> Pippin II dated his rule to the death of his father in 838.

<sup>10</sup> As suggested by J L Nelson, 'The *Annals of St Bertin*', in *Politics and Ritual*, p. 178, cf L Levillain, in his Introduction to *AB*, p. xiii.

<sup>11</sup> Charles issued 21 diplomas between 20<sup>th</sup> June 840 – 19<sup>th</sup> April 843.

<sup>12</sup> Nithard, *Histoire des fils de Loius le Pieux*, ed. P Lauer, Paris, (1926) II, cap 2, pp. 40-42. Nithard was the son of Abbot Angilbert of St Riquier and Charlemagne's daughter, Bertha. See J L Nelson, 'Public biography is

<sup>13</sup> Nithard expected the reversal of fortune to be temporary, Nelson, 'Public Histories', pp. 215-216, with Nithard, II, cap 2, pp. 40-42

choices and their consequences for his subsequent career coloured Nithard's attitude to his cousin Charles the Bald, (for whom he had risked everything), and to Judith.

Nithard's history was commissioned in the middle of a fraternal civil war, weeks before the battle of Fontenoy, when in May 841 Charles and his army entered the city of Châlons-sur-Marne. What Charles wanted from Nithard was a 'true account' of the war with Lothar which would reveal the roots of the conflict with his eldest brother and manifest the justice of his cause in taking up arms against a man who was both his brother and godfather. At this moment victory over Lothar looked by no means certain and support for Charles the Bald was a risky business for the Frankish aristocracy between the Seine and the Meuse. Nithard tells us that he wrote as the demands of the campaign allowed but he may have begun work on Book I, his account of the reign of Louis the Pious, at Châlons; we know that he was writing up book II, which covered the victory of Charles and Louis the German at Fontenoy, during an eclipse on October 18th only a few months later.<sup>14</sup> Books III and IV were completed by the summer of 843. In the first two books of the history, which appear to have been planned and written by Nithard as a continuous narrative, we have contemporary evidence of Judith's political activity in the critical months that followed the death of the emperor.<sup>15</sup>

Reliance for the most part on a single source for Judith's widowhood creates problems. Nithard is a highly partisan political commentator but the nature of his bias is complex. The first audience for Nithard's version of recent history was, of course, Charles the Bald himself and we can assume that the young king would not have invited Nithard to write a history that was in any way critical of his mother's queenship. But perhaps Nithard intended his work for a larger readership, one that had a less partisan attitude to the empress than her son. Janet Nelson has argued that Charles commissioned Nithard to write a public history of contemporary events and that the intended audience for this history were the *primores* who had followed

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<sup>14</sup> Nithard, II, cap. 10, p. 76.

<sup>15</sup> Nelson, 'Public Histories', pp.198-212.



Charles the Bald into Châlons, men, like Nithard himself, who had risked their lands on the frontier to Lothar's advancing forces out of loyalty to political ideals of faithfulness to their lord. They were being urged to stay loyal to Charles the Bald, have faith in his kingship and hold fast to the oaths of fidelity sworn in 839.<sup>16</sup> Through Nithard's writing Charles also sought to assuage the understandable doubts of the Frankish aristocracy about the killing of other Franks. He wanted to reassure those *fideles* that he had done all in his power to prevent the bloodbath of the battle of Fontenoy where brother fought brother.<sup>17</sup> These were men able to debate and react to sophisticated political argument, indeed I suggest that they were the same kind of men to whom Agobard was appealing among Lothar's following in the summer of 833 in his *LA I* where he had criticised the emperor's regime in palace and empire.<sup>18</sup> However, Nelson argues further that not only does this public history come to an end with book II but encoded within the work, and increasingly apparent in books III and IV, is a more personal or 'private history' of Nithard himself.<sup>19</sup>

Janet Nelson's argument has hitherto unrecognised implications for the significance of Judith's activities in 840-841. What has not been sufficiently stressed in previous historiography is that a substantial part of Nithard's account in the first two books of his history centres on the endeavours of the empress, both in the reign of Louis the Pious and since the death of the emperor, in support of her son. Nithard can certainly be described as a 'spin doctor' for Charles the Bald but he was not addressing men who were in any way naive or gullible as to the realities of Frankish politics. Whilst accepting the propagandist nature of Nithard's history in speaking to

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>17</sup> The mission of the Franks was to fight only *exterae gentes*: thus, for example, Agobard, charging Louis the Pious with causing dissension in the realm in the *LA II*, cap III, pp. 311-12.

<sup>18</sup> For comment on the possible audience for these political see above chapter 4, at note 61f; chapter 6, at notes 28-29.

<sup>19</sup> The change in tone present in the preface to book III has been recognised by historians, see H Patze, 'Iustitia bei Nithard', in *Festschrift für Hermann Heimpel zum 70. geburtstag am 19. September 1971*, 3 vols., Göttingen, (1972), 3: pp. 147-65, 161, 163; Nelson, 'Public Histories', pp. 195-233, especially 223-26.



this wider audience he surely had to connect with their view of the world and Judith's place in it. Nithard's account of Judith and her activities in the reign of Louis the Pious and, crucially, in the eighteen months that followed the death of the emperor was therefore, surely, grounded in political reality.

So what did Nithard have to say about the empress to the *optimates* who followed Charles and constituted the audience for books I and II in October 841? Nithard's highly selective presentation of Judith to these men is instructive. In his brief account of the reign of Louis the Pious in book I of his history, Nithard set before his audience what he judged to be the essential information about Judith. First, and clearly a far from trivial matter, he underlined her marital status and affirmed her chastity and virtue without rehearsing the allegations of sexual misconduct. This suggests that in 841 Judith's chastity continued to be important - rumours of Judith's sexual misconduct may have been circulating amongst the supporters of Pippin II and Lothar.<sup>20</sup> The second point concerned a unifying political message at the heart of books I and II, namely the importance of upholding oaths and promises even at the risk of short-term personal disadvantage. Those, like Pippin son of Bernard, who had reneged and defected to Lothar were roundly condemned for exhibiting the behaviour of serfs.<sup>21</sup> Lothar was himself guilty of a villainous volte-face. Judith, with all the clarity of hindsight, is presented as a shrewd political observer of Lothar's insincerity in agreeing to act as the godfather and protector of his baby brother: 'the father and mother were not deceived by Lothar's plotting'.<sup>22</sup> But in a later passage in book I Nithard makes a further point about the oath Lothar had sworn at the birth of Charles: the oath had been made not only to the emperor (and Charles the Bald) but also *to the empress*.<sup>23</sup> Lothar had broken his oath to protect Charles the Bald and

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<sup>20</sup> Nithard I, cap. 4, pp. 18-20. For discussion of Nithard's concern with Judith's chastity see above chapter 5, at note 7.

<sup>21</sup> '*more servorum*', Nithard II, cap. 3, p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> Nithard I, cap. 3, pp. 8-10.

uphold his claim to a share in the *regnum* not only vis-à-vis his father and brother but also with Judith. Thus Nithard presents Judith as the living witness to Lothar's duplicity over nearly twenty years and to the continuing history of fraternal discord. The empress, Nithard implies, had a legitimate interest in the conflict with Lothar: there was a fundamental continuity in her political actions over the years. Third, and finally, Nithard comments on Judith's recent political activity in forming an alliance with leading *primores* to achieve the 839 division of Francia between Lothar and Charles. And here Nithard stresses that Judith had entered into these political negotiations on the authority of Louis the Pious: she had acted 'as the emperor wanted'.<sup>24</sup> Nithard also presents Judith in the context of her own kin, her brothers Conrad and Rudolf are identified with support for Charles.<sup>25</sup> The underlying purpose of book I was surely to present the just claims of Charles the Bald to his father's inheritance and Nithard shows that his mother Judith had a political record of co-operation with magnates to achieve this end. Judith and Charles were therefore only finishing what the emperor had started. I am suggesting that Nithard makes an assumption that his audience - who after all would include men like the seneschal Adalhard - recognised and valued the fact that Judith had a legitimate political role in the household of her son.<sup>26</sup> Nithard, writing in October 841, presupposes a widespread acceptance of Judith's political importance and activities in 840/841. Judith is a political figure whose continued efforts for Charles were judged to be a positive factor in both attracting and holding political support amongst the Frankish aristocracy who constituted his audience.

Despite the loss of access to the main palaces of Francia it is clear that at Poitiers in June 840 Judith and Charles the Bald had a base on which to build. There was

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<sup>23</sup> '*Nam, uti praemissum est, idem olim patri matrique ac Karolo juraverat ut partem regni quam vellet pater eidem daret, et eandem se consentire et protegere illi contra omnes inimicos omnibus diebus vite sue deberet*'. Nithard I, cap. 6, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> Nithard I, cap. 6, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> Nithard I, cap. 4, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> A point made by Nelson, 'Public Histories', p. 201.



certainly the nucleus of an army; according to Prudentius in February 840 the emperor, fearing further hostilities from his grandson Pippin II, had left 'a sizeable part of the army' with Judith and Charles in Aquitaine<sup>27</sup>. At Poitiers they could call on the experience and connections of Bishop Ebroin, a seasoned military leader. The problem for Charles was that he was threatened on two fronts: first and immediately by Pippin II in Aquitaine and second from the advancing forces of Lothar. The most vulnerable area Francia, lay between the Meuse and the Seine, where it was crucial that the aristocracy held firm in their allegiance to Charles. The evidence is fragmentary and circumstantial but over the next twelve months it is possible to differentiate the tasks of Charles and his mother in the campaign. The division of responsibilities was logical enough. Charles moved northwards into Francia to persuade, challenge and threaten the aristocracy to declare for him: Judith remained in Aquitaine, raising soldiers and gathering resources to supply Charles.<sup>28</sup> This division of activities illustrates a difference between kingship and queenship: that is between the king's leadership of men in the field and the queen's management of resources to enable him to fulfill this role. Nithard, travelling with the household of Charles the Bald, does not record Judith's itinerary in Aquitaine. For example, in August 840 Charles was at Bourges and then left Aquitaine and marched to Quiersy.<sup>29</sup> We know that Judith remained in Aquitaine because Pippin II seized the opportunity presented by the divided forces of mother and son and promptly positioned himself to attack Judith's camp. This suggests that Judith had accompanied her son to Bourges and then remained there whilst Charles moved north. Charles the Bald, on hearing the news, rushed back into Aquitaine to prevent the capture of Judith and her household.<sup>30</sup> This episode illustrates the manpower problems faced by Charles in August 840. He lacked the military resources to deal with the simultaneous threat

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<sup>27</sup>'*non pauca parte exercitus*', AB, an 840, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> In this task Judith may have had the assistance of her seneschal Altmar, an official who would now have come into his own as her household moved independently of Charles in Aquitaine.

<sup>29</sup> Nithard II, cap. 2, p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> Nithard II, cap. 3, p. 46.



from Pippin and the advance of Lothar. This was a dangerous time for Charles. Nithard's account omits the successes of Lothar during the summer and early autumn after he crossed the Meuse and started his advance towards the Seine.<sup>31</sup> But what is striking is how Judith's position in August 840 influenced the war aims of both Pippin and, more significantly, of Charles the Bald. Pippin's attempt to overrun Judith's camp is evidence of her military importance at this stage in the conflict. The empress would certainly have been a useful hostage but Pippin had surely calculated on winning much more than a psychological coup over his uncle Charles. We can guess that Pippin was after the treasure, weapons and resources of Judith's household. Nithard does not need to comment on this explicitly because this was something that his aristocratic audience would have taken for granted. In these first uncertain months after his father's death Charles the Bald was not prepared to risk the loss of any resources to his enemies nor a division of his forces in Francia. This reading makes some sense of Nithard's ambiguous statement that because Charles 'had nowhere safe to leave his mother they both departed for Francia'.<sup>32</sup> But are we meant to believe that Charles lacked any stronghold in Aquitaine in August 840 or was it only the Bourges area that was judged dangerous? There is some evidence that late in 840 Pippin II was able to install his candidate as archbishop of Bourges.<sup>33</sup> Here we are faced with the considerable deficiencies of the contemporary sources for Aquitaine and, in particular, for Pippin II who, just like his uncle Charles the Bald, was engaged in fighting for a paternal inheritance. Perhaps this is where Nithard's own personal agenda begins to come into play; his sights seem to have been fixed on Francia not Aquitaine. At Orleans, in November, a truce was agreed with Lothar for the winter. We know of one notable political success of this dark period for the fortunes of Charles and Judith, Lupus was installed as abbot of Ferrières in place of Odo. Count

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<sup>31</sup> Lothar restored Ebo at Rheims with the agreement of the diocesan bishops and in the Paris basin two of the key supporters of Charles the Bald, Hilduin of St Denis and Count Gerold, declared for Lothar, Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 108-09.

<sup>32</sup> '*Karolus quoque, a fuga qua Pippinum et suos dispersat reversus et quoniam matrem ubi tuto relinqueret non habebat, pariter ad Francie partes properabat*', Nithard II, cap. 3, with note 2, pp. 46-7.

<sup>33</sup> Levillain, p. clxxvii and note 6; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, p. 111.

Gerold and abbot Hilduin may have reneged on their support for Charles which they had sworn in 837-8 but the young king was prepared to reward the loyalty of one of his mother's protégés.<sup>34</sup>

It is in the first six months of 841, the period before the battle of Fontenoy on 25th June 841, fought between the forces of Charles the Bald and Louis the German on the one side and those of Lothar and Pippin II on the other, that Judith is most prominent in Nithard's book II. In March when Charles again headed north to the Seine he left Judith in Aquitaine. Nithard states that: 'he ordered all those Aquitanians who favoured his cause to follow him afterwards along with his mother'.<sup>35</sup> It is clear from information later in the book that Judith remained in Aquitaine to head up the operation of organising his followers and then delivering this army to Charles in Francia. In April we have the clearest evidence that she had charge of substantial amounts of treasure and other resources. Judith sent royal gear from her base in Aquitaine (again Nithard does not identify her position) to Charles and his army at Troyes.<sup>36</sup> This is another illustration of how Charles and his mother were working in partnership as a political and military team. The empress responded to her son's needs and was able to arrange the transport of valuable resources, Nithard mentions a crown, precious liturgical objects besides a great quantity of gold and jewels, across hostile terrain.<sup>37</sup> Organisational skills, learnt over the previous twenty years in the imperial palace were put to good use: in *DOP*, Adalhard had emphasized the important role of the queen and seneschal in making sure that foodstuffs were in the right place at the right time. Judith's success in mustering an army for her son in Aquitaine also determined the movements and strategy of Charles. He reached

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<sup>34</sup> Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 110-11.

<sup>35</sup> '*Ergo omnes Aquitanos, qui sue parti favebant, una cum matre post se venire praecepit*', Nithard II, cap. 6, p. 54.

<sup>36</sup> Nithard, III, cap. 3, pp. 90-92, narrates this event to his audience as a near miracle: the arrival of the correct liturgical vestments for the Easter vigil on 16th April affirmed the faithfulness of the loyal but demoralised followers in the camp of Charles; see with Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>37</sup> Nithard II, cap. 8, p. 60.



Attigny, one day early on 7th May, for the pre-arranged meeting with Lothar but after four days Lothar had not arrived. Charles, according to Nithard convoked an assembly to discuss tactics.

'Some said that he should go and meet his mother since she was on her way with the Aquitanians. But the majority (*maxima pars*) either advised him to march against Lothar or declared that he should at least decide on a place to wait for Lothar's arrival. They felt he should do this because if he changed his itinerary everyone would say that he had run away. Such talk would only embolden Lothar and his followers. Besides those men who had been afraid to join either party so far would pin their hopes on Lothar and flock to him everywhere. This is exactly what happened when, in spite of much objection, Charles was won over to the former view. So he went to the city of Châlons.'<sup>38</sup>

This is one of the most fascinating passages in the first part of Nithard's *Histories*: he presents a political debate amongst the warband where the view of the majority, the *maxima pars*, is aired only to be rejected by the king. Here Nithard's own subjective history comes into play, he would surely have identified himself with the men whose objections to waiting for the arrival of the empress were rational enough. They were also proved right in the short term. But why did Charles wait to meet up with Judith? An answer is not necessarily to be found in his attachment to his mother or any sense of filial duty. As in August 840, when Charles was presented with a choice between an emergency in Aquitaine or his inheritance in Francia between the Seine and the Meuse he put his Aquitanian kingdom first on both occasions. There was sound strategy here, for if Pippin II was able to gain the upper hand politically in Aquitaine then Charles would have found it impossible to maintain his foothold in

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<sup>38</sup> 'Quidam autem dicebant, quoniam mater sua una cum Aquitaniis veniebat, obviam illi ire debere; sed maxima pars aut obviam Lodhario iter arripere suadebant aut certe ubicumque vellet adventum illius preastolari debere dicebant, ob hoc quidem maxime quoniam, si quoquo modo aliorum iter flectere coepisset, cuncti fugam illum inisse jactarent et hinc Lodharium et suos audentiores fieri debere atque hi qui adhuc causa timoris neutri se copulaverant ad illum affluere undique sperabant. Quamobrem Cadhellonicam Karolus adiit urbem ibique, matre una cum Aquitaniis recepta, ...' Nithard II, cap. 9, p. 64.



Neustria. Effectively surrounded by Lothar and Pippin II, he would have been unable to prevent his loyal men between the Seine and the Meuse being seduced to Lothar's allegiance. This accounts for Charles rushing back into Aquitaine to prevent the capture of Judith the previous summer and also his refusal, in the teeth of considerable opposition from his leading men, to jeopardise the rendezvous with Judith and the arrival of the army from Aquitaine. The debate amongst the *proceres* at Attigny thus affords some insight into the ability of Charles to carry his men with him, maybe skills he had learned from his father's masterful handling of assemblies.<sup>39</sup> Attigny may also provide us with a glimpse of Nithard's own attitude to Judith. Karl Leyser has argued that this episode is evidence that Judith was in fact a liability to Charles in 841 and that this was also Nithard's view.<sup>40</sup> Yet Nithard's perspective on the debate is hardly objective, his interests lay in Francia and this caused him to prioritise the northern frontier. Charles saw things differently: Aquitaine and its resources were key and his mother was the one to deliver them.<sup>41</sup> He was prepared to risk what he hoped would be a temporary loss of support between the Seine and the Meuse rather than lose a potential Aquitanian army. No other such political debate or conflict is presented in the *Histories*. Nor is gender the issue for Nithard. At Attigny, Judith is discussed as if she were another aristocratic military leader, offering another military option. It may not be a coincidence that it was at exactly this moment, 'just before we entered the city of Châlons', that Charles directed Nithard to write a true account of events.

But what was Judith doing in Aquitaine? What strategies did she employ to raise resources and an army for Charles in Francia? The ability to raise troops depended on the capacity to reward them with treasure and spoils or the promise of future rewards or estates. The supply of moveable wealth, of treasure, was critical in a political

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<sup>39</sup> For example the bravura performance of Louis the Pious at Nijmegen in September 830, see above, chapter 4.

<sup>40</sup> 'Three Historians', a previously unpublished lecture in his collected essays *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe*, ed T. Reuter, London (1995) pp. 19-28 at pp. 22-23.

<sup>41</sup> Were the resources of the silver mines at Melle available to Charles and Judith in the Spring of 841?

emergency when soldiers needed to be mustered at short notice. The propagandistic nature of Nithard's account obscures the unedifying reality of how this was accomplished. Frankish authors have a tendency to present Aquitaine as if it were a faraway country of which they knew little, Nithard is certainly neither knowledgeable, nor even particularly interested in Aquitanian matters. The lack of Aquitanian-based sources, or those favourable to the legitimate claims of Pippin II in pursuing an Aquitanian *regnum*, needs to be remembered. Nithard is silent on the getting of treasure and troops in Aquitaine. However, hostile accounts of Lothar's actions in rewarding *his* troops after the defeat at Fontenoy indicate the means by which it was done. There is the account by Prudentius of the sack of Le Mans in 841 when Lothar took the treasure of religious houses into his custody for 'safe-keeping'. Early in 842 when Lothar retreated to Aachen he was so desperate for treasure that plate from the chapel treasury was broken up to pay his men.<sup>42</sup> The search for plunder may have been a complementary motive behind Charles the Bald's abortive ambush of Bernard of Septimania in January 841, when Bernard escaped but lost his baggage train.<sup>43</sup> Judith, raising troops in Aquitaine, may have been doing no different: we may speculate as to whether she took the treasure of religious houses favourable to Pippin II into 'safekeeping' to pay her army.<sup>44</sup>

The arrival of Judith and the Aquitanians at Châlons to join up with the forces of Charles and, soon after, Louis the German was to prove a crucial factor in the outcome of the battle. But what did Judith know of warfare? Her biblical namesake had triumphed over a whole army single-handed but not on the battlefield. Holofernes had been decapitated by a woman with his own weapon: a double ignominy.<sup>45</sup> The chance to behead her stepson Lothar whilst he lay in a drunken stupor may have been attractive to Judith but the opportunity to achieve this fantasy

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<sup>42</sup> Le Mans: *AB*, an 841, p. 40; Aachen: *AB*, an 842, p. 41, it was probably the decorated silver platter described by Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap. 33, p. 46.

<sup>43</sup> Nithard II, cap. 5, p. 50.

<sup>44</sup> Ste Croix, Poitiers is one possible candidate, Judith had been imprisoned here in 830, and it was within the north-western zone of Aquitaine controlled by Charles.

<sup>45</sup> Judith, 13: 3-18.



was unlikely to present itself. Yet the biblical warrior-widow may have inspired the empress; after all Judith's song of triumph proclaimed how God could work out his plan for the salvation of his people through a righteous woman. And hadn't Walahfrid once reminded her that she was 'not named Judith in vain' and would overcome her enemies?<sup>46</sup> The biblical story also spoke of how female intelligence, sometimes cast as feminine guile, can overcome male force. Victory on the battle field depends on brains, strategy as much as brawn or, military might, and Judith was able to supply her son with both. She provided him with manpower, with an army, something she had not done for Louis the Pious. And not only did Judith recruit an army she also led these troops towards the battlefield. Fontenoy presented a political emergency and in a crisis such as war, gender and other cultural boundaries often crumble only to be rebuilt when more normal social conditions are restored. Queens might know a great deal about warfare and armies. This was partly class knowledge acquired in the militaristic environments of aristocratic households and the royal palace. Gender was not the only barrier to military service: abbots and bishops were also, theoretically, non-combatants yet they too had military obligations and knowledge of warfare. Some of them had, of course, been raised not in the cloister but in the secular, military environment of the palace *scola*. Judith had responsibility for the military obligations of her own houses. She had rubbed shoulders with the palatine *milites*. She was another wise counsellor like the seneschal Adalhard, and bishops Ebroin and Aldric and like these men could offer Charles his father's counsel. Is it stretching the evidence too far to place her in the campaign tent with her son and step-son discussing battle tactics?

In fact we have good evidence that Judith was present at Fontenoy and from another contemporary source who complements Nithard's view of the empress. The Italian historian Agnellus describes Judith in the tent of Charles the Bald after the victory.<sup>47</sup> In his *History of the Bishops of Ravenna*, Agnellus provides another perspective on Fontenoy. The presentation of Judith by Agnellus is instructive - she cuts a figure

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<sup>46</sup> Walahfrid, *De imagine*, vv. 192-6, p. 378.



both imperial and maternal at the side of her son and step-son: the historian describes her both as *imperatrix* - and *mater Karoli*. Archbishop George of Ravenna had travelled north of the Alps to fight for Lothar at Fontenoy and, as events proved, this political gamble cost him dear. Agnellus held George personally responsible for the impoverishment of the church of Ravenna by his actions. George had squandered the resources of his diocese, scattered his clergy and lost the treasure of his church.<sup>48</sup> But he was also guilty of vanity and arrogance, proud before his fall. According to Agnellus, he had boasted before the battle of Lothar's certain victory and had promised to tonsure Charles the Bald personally for his imperial master. (We can imagine that a parallel fate would have overtaken Judith: consignment to a convent). Instead it was George and his clergy who were taken prisoner by the victorious brothers Charles and Louis.<sup>49</sup> The treatment of George and his clergy by Charles and Judith is described in detail by Agnellus. In his narrative Charles and Judith fulfill complementary roles of king and queen in their dealings with the recalcitrant archbishop. First Charles, 'moved by mercy' ordered the clergy of Ravenna to be found and treated with honour. The argument with their archbishop may have been personal but his priests had only followed their lord and were to be allowed to return home. Judith also displayed mercy to the impoverished priests: she gave them treasure.

'The empress gave them an amount (a *tribilion*) of silver, assuring them that it was all she had to give, saying: "Take this box (*ferculum*) and so relieve your poverty".<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>*Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis* ed. O. Holder-Egger, MGH SRL, Hanover, (1878), pp. 265-391.

<sup>48</sup> On Agnellus and his history see T S Brown, 'Romanitas and Campanilismo: Agnellus of Ravenna's View of the Past', in *The Inheritance of Historiography*, eds. C. Holdsworth and P. Wiseman, Exeter, (1985) pp. 107-14, and *idem* 'Louis the Pious and the Papacy', in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 297-307 at 299-300, 305-306; D. Mauskopf Deliyannis, 'Agnellus of Ravenna and Iconoclasm: Theology and Politics in a Ninth-Century Historical Text', *Speculum* 71, (1996) pp. 559-576 at pp. 562-63.

<sup>49</sup> Prudentius corroborates Agnellus but tells a somewhat different story; George was allowed to return home with honour, *AB*, an 841, p.38.

<sup>50</sup> The latin of Agnellus is not easy to translate. Judith was perhaps giving the priests an amount of silver in a box. The text reads: '*Iudit vero, Caroli mater, dedit eisdem*

This is the only example in any source of Judith's speech. Agnellus' presentation of Judith's behaviour is conventional: a queen giving alms to the poor. Judith is presented as generous; she is victorious yet magnanimous in victory and, as befits a queen, merciful and generous. I don't think we need to take literally Judith's claim in this passage that she gave all she had to relieve the poverty of the Ravenna priests. Agnellus is surely drawing a contrast between the piety and moral responsibility displayed by the empress and the pastoral negligence of the disgraced archbishop who had led his clergy to ruin at Fontenoy. Judith's alms-giving reveals her respect and care for the front-line infantry of the Christian faith, priests. She acts as their good shepherd a role that their own pastor, George, had abdicated. There is another perspective on Judith's almsgiving at Fontenoy. It could be inferred that this silver was part of the spoils captured from the defeated armies and followers of Lothar and Pippin. It would be going too far to suggest that the empress had the power to disburse treasure freely, the sense of the passage implies that she acts here with the assent of her son, but she clearly had authority to distribute alms after a bloody battle to impoverished priests from the defeated army. Yet, it is possible that Judith was granted a share of the spoils by Charles the Bald to reward the Aquitanian contingent she had led to the battlefield. She had, after all, been accustomed to pay out the annual gifts to the palatine *milites* so it is not unlikely that the responsibility to give these men their appropriate share of the spoils fell to her.

Judith's goodwill was also extended towards the hapless archbishop. The two brother kings Louis the German and Charles, 'on hearing what sort of malign, savage and vile character, George was' determined to exile him permanently. But: 'the empress Judith, the mother of Charles, being of a merciful spirit put it to her son and stepson (*privignum*) that George should be allowed to return to home'. Charles the Bald treated the archbishop to an angry, and very public, tongue-lashing but spared him the humiliation of exile:

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*sacerdotibus tribilion (?) argenteum modicum unum, asserens, se non plus habere, dicens: 'Tollite hunc ferculum, refocillate penuriam vestram'; Agnellus, Liber, p.389.* I am grateful to the advice of Professor T S Brown and Professor Philip Grierson in the interpretation of this passage.



'Look then, I am resolved to do as my mother bids me: return to your see'.<sup>51</sup>

The inclusion of Louis the German in this passage has been overlooked but it is the response of Charles to his mother that demonstrates where her prime influence lay. In this passage Charles gives a public acknowledgement of his mother's maternal authority. Her intercession for the unworthy George highlights his wrongdoing, graphically described in the speech of the king himself. In victory it befitted a Christian king to be magnanimous, so it was only fitting that Charles should accede to the wishes of his mother who urged reconciliation and forgiveness. Reconciliation and the magnanimity of the victorious royal brothers is also emphasised by Nithard: the burial of the dead by the bishops on the Sunday following the battle. Yet we have to allow for a note of irony or humour here; Charles the Bald was emphatically not a king who did as his mother or anyone else told him. He granted Judith's request but only after having made George listen to an angry catalogue of his crimes. In other words having first frightened the archbishop out of his wits, Charles then let him off the hook. One wonders if the punchline, 'I will do as my mother tells me', was greeted with amusement. The joke was on George.<sup>52</sup>

It is interesting to compare Judith's intercession for George at Fontenoy with Thionville in 835. On both occasions emperor and king were flushed with righteous anger at their betrayal by treacherous churchmen and Judith was cast as the agent of Christian virtue and moral authority. Secular aristocratic military values, including the desire for revenge, were tempered with Christian forgiveness. On both occasions a king's mercy is prompted by the intervention of a queen: the queen's intercession is a useful mechanism for negotiating a cessation of hostilities. But there are important differences between the assembly at Thionville in 835 and the battlefield at Fontenoy in 841. First, the latter was an interaction not between husband and wife but between son and mother. The model of Queen Esther before King Ahasuerus was no longer

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<sup>51</sup> '*Ecce, sicut mea praecepit genitrix, solvam. Revertere ad propriam sedem*', Agnellus, *Liber*, p. 391.



appropriate. A nearer and more ambiguous model for the queen-mother petitioning her son was that of the virgin queen of heaven and her son Christ. Whether or not Charles was making fun of George it is clear that it was as a mother, as well as an empress, that Judith had moral authority.

After the victory at Fontenoy Charles and his mother left the battle area together and moved towards the Loire.<sup>53</sup> The evidence comes from near the beginning of Nithard's third book and is his last reference to Judith. The lack of information about Judith in the latter part of Nithard's history is not necessarily an indication that she now faded out of sight politically: but what it does show are Nithard's changing preoccupations. As his work changed in tone, and probably ceased to be a public history for Charles, so there was no longer an imperative to include the activities of the empress. And less so if, as seems possible, she was based predominantly in Aquitaine. The problem is that after Nithard's last notice of Judith in July 841 there is no further evidence for her until 843. But we can be sure that an event in the life of Charles the Bald had a profound impact on her situation, namely his marriage on 14th December 842.<sup>54</sup> Fontenoy had not resolved fraternal or political conflict although it may have considerably strengthened the position of Charles in Aquitaine.<sup>55</sup> Pockets of resistance to Charles in West Francia persisted and he needed to bind powerful men to his cause. It is against this background of negotiations and alliances in the twelve months before Verdun that Charles the Bald took a queen. Ermentrude was the daughter of count Odo (killed in 834) and Ingeltrude, but in December 842 her significant family connection was the fact that she was the niece of Adalhard. The

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<sup>52</sup> But who was laughing? The audience for this rhetoric were the clergy of Ravenna, see J M Pizarro, *Writing Ravenna*, 1995; Janet Nelson sees this vignette as an example of Charles the Bald's 'sardonic humour', *Charles the Bald*, p. 119.

<sup>53</sup> Nithard III, cap. 2, p. 84.

<sup>54</sup> Hyam, 'Ermentrude', p. 154, note 2.

<sup>55</sup> The battle made a deep and lasting impression on the Franks, see Engelbert's dark poem written for Lothar where the killing at Fontenoy is seen as a tragedy for both sides, MGH Poetae 2, ed. E Dümmler, pp.138-39.

marriage was celebrated at St Quentin where the couple then spent Christmas.<sup>56</sup> In what is essentially one of the last passages in his final book Nithard's hostility to Adalhard and, indeed his disappointment with Charles the Bald, is made plain.

'His father [Louis the Pious], in his day, had loved this Adalhard and had allowed him to have his way in the entire empire. And he [Adalhard] strove less for what was in the common good than to please everyone. He urged the distribution of *libertates* and public resources and so in granting the petitions of all and sundry he effectively ruined the *res publica*. It was in this way that he arrived at the present point where he was able without difficulty to direct the people just as he wished. This was the reason that Charles contracted the marriage because he thought that in this way he would be able to win over the majority(*maximam partem*) of the people (*plebis*).<sup>57</sup>

Nithard's highly political explanation for the marriage alliance between Charles and the niece of his seneschal is a rare acknowledgement of the realities of these relationships. If Adalhard was the man to deliver the *plebs*, and Nithard is surely thinking here of Adalhard's patronage network amongst the lesser aristocracy, then Charles the Bald had judged wisely.<sup>58</sup> Adalhard was also abbot of St Martin's Tours: the monastery was in a key political location on the Loire, an area where Charles required a powerful *fidelis*. But what is interesting about Adalhard, a point stressed indirectly by the disgruntled Nithard, is that he was a powerful figure at the courts of both Louis the Pious *and* his son Charles. He had retained his office of seneschal. This is an important difference between queens and other political patrons and *palatini*. Judith and Adalhard had both been political power-brokers at the court of

<sup>56</sup> Nithard IV, cap. 6, p. 142; Odo: Depreux, *Prosopographie*, 281, pp. 265-66.

<sup>57</sup> 'Dilexerat autem pater ejus suo in tempore hunc Adelardum adeo ut quod iden vellet in universo imperio, hoc pater faceret. Qui utilitati publice minus prospiciens placere cuique intendit. Hinc libertates, hinc publica in propriis usibus distribuere suasit ac, dum quod quique petebat, ut fieret effecit, rem publicam penitus annullavit. Quo quidem modo effectum est ut in hac tempestate populum qua vellet facile devertere posset, et hac de re Karolus prefatas nuptias maxime iniit, quia cum eo maximam partem plebis sibi vindicare posse putavit'. Nithard IV, cap. 6, p. 142.

<sup>58</sup> On Adalhard's family see above chapter 5, note 54; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 127-8.



Louis the Pious, indeed in 831 they had acted as joint intercessors in a diploma for Hohenberg.<sup>59</sup> But Judith could not re-invent herself as a queen for Charles the Bald. Her occupation of this role was temporary. Unlike Adalhard, she was not able to deliver a patronage network of *plebs* for Charles. Judith's active exercise of queenship thus ended with the marriage of Charles the Bald and the establishment of a new queen. Agobard had been unequivocal: to be a king was to be married. Charles had to marry at some stage and he was certainly old enough at nineteen. He had also acquired political maturity to establish his own royal household and dynasty: in the year since Fontenoy he had established his credentials as an able war-leader and a tough political manager as abbot Lupus, and Nithard, knew only too well. Only one woman could sit beside the king: there could only be one queen. Judith's closeness to Adalhard, in the mid-830s and Adalhard's own activities during the campaign of 841, may suggest that the choice of his niece as wife to Charles came as no surprise.<sup>60</sup>

The new queen was on campaign with her husband within weeks of her marriage.<sup>61</sup> There is some evidence that suggests that Judith was itinerating with her son and his new queen. When Charles the Bald visited Adalhard at St Martin's in February 843, it is possible that Judith accompanied her son and his new wife.<sup>62</sup> It was here that she died on 19th April. (We know the exact date from the commemoration of her anniversary at monasteries.) Judith's death is recorded under the annal for 843 in the ninth-century *Annales Engolismenses*.<sup>63</sup> There is no notice of her death in the *AB*

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<sup>59</sup> See above chapter 5, note 43.

<sup>60</sup> Adalhard had lead part of the forces at Fontenoy, Nithard had fought with him; Nithard II, cap. 10, p. 78.

<sup>61</sup> *Charles the Bald*, p. 129; Hyam, 'Ermentrude', pp. 154-168.

<sup>62</sup> Charles was at Tours on 23rd February, Tessier, 20, pp. 47-9.

<sup>63</sup> *Annales Engolismenses*, ed. O Holder-Egger, MGH SS 16, an 843, p. 486. Judith's death is also recorded in the later *Chronicon Aquitanicum* ed. G Pertz, MGH SS 2, an. 843, p. 253; John Gillingham has shown that the Angouleme annals were the probable source for the *Chronicon Aquitanicum*, see his 'Ademar of Chabannes and the History of Aquitaine in the Reign of Charles the Bald', in *Court and Kingdom*, pp. 41-51, at pp. 49-50.



but this is not remarkable; the deaths of royal wives are recorded but not of dowager queens.<sup>64</sup> We can only guess why Judith was at Tours when she died. There is no evidence to suggest that Judith was ill or had retired permanently to St Martin's. Yet there are reasons why St Martin, Tours may have appealed to her as a place to spend a congenial retirement from the court. First, and most important of all, St Martin was a powerful saint: the special blessing and spiritual protection that his relics could give would have been attractive to any ninth century Christian. St Martin also had strong connections with Carolingian kings and emperors: he had been the *patronus* of Charlemagne.<sup>65</sup> Charles the Bald, (in imitation of his grandfather and namesake?) also identified the soldier-saint as his *patronus* and in 842 as an act of filial piety granted St Arnulf's, Metz (where his father was buried), an estate in the Moselle region on the condition that a chapel was to be constructed there in honour of St Martin.<sup>66</sup> Judith had herself been a notable political patron of St Martin, Tours and to the smaller community of St Martin, Marmoutier.<sup>67</sup> Tours was also a place of safety. In 843 Adalhard would have been able to offer the empress considerable political and military protection. If we look back over Judith's career and the several occasions on which her physical safety had been threatened, most recently by Pippin II at Bourges in August 840, this may have been a significant factor in her stay at Tours whether through illness or retirement.<sup>68</sup> The monastery also had associations which might have appealed to the widow of a second Clovis.<sup>69</sup> Queen Clotilde, widow of Clovis, had retired to Tours at the death of her husband. She lived on at St Martin's for many

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<sup>64</sup> Bertrada's death is recorded only in Einhard's revised annals, *ARF*, an 783, p. 67.

<sup>65</sup> Charlemagne had granted St Martin's, Tours a tranche of estates in Italy in 774 - they had formerly belonged to Queen Ansa's convent of San Salvatore, later Judith's *dos*. see above chapter 2.

<sup>66</sup> Tessier, 9, pp. 24-25.

<sup>67</sup> See above, chapter 5, at note 66.

<sup>68</sup> Tours had strategic importance for the control of the surrounding region and Loire valley.

<sup>69</sup> *Hludowicus* was a latinised form of the germanic name, see *AB*, an 869, where Hincmar makes the link between Louis the Pious and Clovis, p. 162.

years, dying in 544.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps Judith saw herself as a second Clotilde, aspiring to sanctity at the shrine of Martin. Liutgard, last wife of Charlemagne had also died at Tours.<sup>71</sup> We know that the saint and his monks were in Judith's thoughts at the end of her life: in her last moments, '*in extremo sui temporis*' she had intended to grant the community at Tours the *villa Mons* which lay in the *pagus* of Melun. She died before completing the transaction. Mons had originally been given to Judith by Louis the Pious which suggests that it may have been part of her *dos*.<sup>72</sup> A reference to the estate in a St Martin's charter dated 15th April 932, a few days before her anniversary, described the *villa Mons* in relation to Judith as *ex propria dote sua*.<sup>73</sup> There is no record of her funeral at St Martins but it would surely have fitted her imperial status as a friend of the saint and his community. Charlemagne had had his mother Bertrada buried with honour beside Pippin at St Denis. In April 843 it was not possible for Charles the Bald to bury Judith beside his father at Metz.

There is however a piece of evidence which goes against the grain of the scenario I have offered here for Judith's retirement and death at Tours. It comes from the so-called Annals of Xanten under the year 843 and casts quite a different light on the relationship of Judith and her son towards the end of her life.

'In this same year (843) the empress Judith, mother of Charles, died at the city of Tours after having been robbed of all her resources (*praedata*) by her son.'<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Her body was taken to Paris by her two sons, she was buried in St Peter's beside Clovis, the church contained the body of St Genevieve. Gregory, *Libri Historiarum* 2, cap. 43, MGH SRM 1, p. 106.

<sup>71</sup> Liutgard died on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 800 and was buried at St Martin's, *ARF*, an 800, p. 110.

<sup>72</sup> Tessier, 239, pp. 35-41, at p. 40.

<sup>73</sup> P Labbe, *Eloges Historiques*, II, (Paris, 1651) pp. 528-9. I am grateful to Dr Giles Brown for pursuing this reference for me in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

<sup>74</sup> '*Eodem anno Iudhit imperatrix, mater Karoli, predata a filio substantia omni Turonis civitate migravit a seculo*', *AX*, an 843, p. 13.



The key word here is *praedata* which implies coercion or plunder. The author of this grim annal, with its implicit criticism of Charles the Bald's actions towards his mother was probably Gerward, former palace librarian to the old emperor, and indeed Judith. This means that he would have been familiar with the empress, sharing her scholarly interests and scholar-friends such as Walahfrid, Freulf and Ebo.<sup>75</sup> Gerward's annals were written at some distance from Tours, at Ghent.<sup>76</sup> What did Gerward mean by Judith's *substantia*? It is impossible to make a distinction here between estates or moveable resources, so perhaps 'assets' is a better translation. Judith's *substantia* may have consisted of moveable resources from the royal household that were under the control of the queen. There may have been particular treasure and regalia, such as crowns, jewels and robes, that belonged to the queen, and signified her status as royal wife. Perhaps Judith also had some plunder and spoils from the victory at Fontenoy? From mid-December 842 this wealth was required by Charles to endow the new queen.<sup>77</sup> Ermentrude now had responsibility for what Abbot Adalhard, in the *DOP*, had described as the magnificence of the royal household. We also need to remember that Charles was still short of landed resources to reward wavering *optimates* or fix the loyalty of men who had given faithful service. If Judith was at St Martin's then she had no need of the assets of a queen to maintain a patronage network. But perhaps the *villa Mons* provides one last clue: Charles the Bald held on to the estate for another nineteen years before passing it on to St Martin's. Despite the fact that St Martin was his *patronus* Charles the Bald was prepared to risk his heavenly displeasure. Here indeed is an example of Charles failing to do what his mother had asked. It is possible that Gerward had news of the death of the empress *and* the seizure of the *villa Mons* by her son at the same moment: shocked by the filial impiety to mother and saint he combined the two events in his annal. The annal certainly has a censorious tone. Perhaps Gerward thought that Charles, whom he would have observed as a child being educated in the palace by Judith's protégé Walahfrid, had

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<sup>75</sup> For Gerward's career, see Einhard, *Translatio*, IV, cap 27, p. 258; Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle*, p.69; Airlie, 'Bonds', pp. 195-97.

<sup>76</sup> On Gerward's authorship of these annals sees H Löwe, 'Studien zu den *Annales Xantenses*', *Deutsches Archiv*, 8, (1951), pp. 59- 99, at 93-97.

<sup>77</sup> Hyam, 'Ermentrude', pp. 164-65.



treated the empress shabbily. An intellectual who remembered the emperor and empress and their court at Aachen, Gerward may have reflected on the ingratitude of the younger generation. Yet in defence of Charles the wider political circumstances in the winter of 842/843 need to be considered. Charles the Bald remained under pressure from Pippin II and resources to maintain his following were scarce. It was not only the empress and the community at Tours who were casualties of these straitened times. The community of Ferrières also had cause to complain: St Josse was re-assigned to an important layman, Count Odulf as the price of his loyalty to Charles the Bald.<sup>78</sup>

Ernst Dümmler interpreted Gerward's annal as the sign that Judith had been discarded by a thankless son: all Judith's politicking over the last twenty years had come to nought. The fact that Judith died a few months before the 'Treaty of Verdun' which saw the division of the Carolingian empire between the three surviving legitimate sons of Louis the Pious also seemed to Dümmler, of tremendous significance. Judith's death was followed by the end of the unitary Frankish empire. Dümmler saw the two events as inextricably bound together: '...she did not live to see the end of all the disasters which her blind mother love and her crimes had inflicted on the state. ... She ended her days in want and grief.'<sup>79</sup> Judith thus held a personal and moral responsibility for destroying the empire of Charlemagne. But it was hindsight, and above all the chance factor of her early death in the spring of 843, that enabled Dümmler to place Judith's death in the context of imperial disintegration. Judith was only about forty when she died in 843 and the women in her family were long-lived. If she had died in her seventies, like her sister Emma, then the loss of her resources would not have been her defining tragedy. There are also other possibilities for her dowager-queenship. First, Judith might have lived on in the household of her son and daughter-in-law honoured, like Bertrada, as the matriarch of the family. This is, of course, Einhard's idealised view of the relationship between Charlemagne and

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<sup>78</sup> Lupus, no. 32, pp. 147-150, with note 4; see the comments of J L Nelson on Ferrières and St Josse, *Charles the Bald*, pp. 109-110, p. 121.

<sup>79</sup> *Geschichte*, p. 181.

Bertrada but perhaps this domestic peace and harmony in the family was only possible once the queen-mother had given up the reins of power in the household. Eventually Judith might indeed have withdrawn to St Martin's where, like a second Clotilde, she could live into old age under the protection of the mighty St Martin and care of abbot Adalhard.<sup>80</sup> Or she might have retired to Chelles, where her mother had once been abbess. Here, close to the shrine of the saint-queen Balthild she could have devoted herself to intellectual and spiritual pursuits - overseeing the writing of the continuing history of the Carolingian family?<sup>81</sup> The fact that there is no biography of Charles the Bald may not be unconnected with his mother's early death.

Charles the Bald certainly honoured his mother in death. His eldest daughter born about a year after the death of her grandmother was named Judith after her.<sup>82</sup> But, ever his parents' son, he remained unsentimental about appeals to their memory from abbot Lupus. In the 840s Lupus dared to remind Charles the Bald that despite the fact that he had appropriated the cell of St. Josse to endow Count Odulf the monks still continued to pray for the souls of his mother and father. The cell had originally been given to the community through the patronage of Judith. Lupus, perhaps out of a sense of loyalty to the memory of Judith and her patronage, attempted to prick the conscience of her son.<sup>83</sup>

As early as 842 Charles had instituted an annual commemorative meal in honour of his father at St Arnulf, Metz.<sup>84</sup> Prayers for the soul of the emperor had been a regular

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<sup>80</sup> Protection of widows was a special duty of the powerful. see J L Nelson, 'The Wary Widow', in *Power and Property*, eds., W Davies and P Fouracre, (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 82-112.

<sup>81</sup> Chelles was referred to as Ermentrude's convent, Tessier, 169, Dec 854, p. 446.

<sup>82</sup> On the career of young Judith see Stafford, 'Charles the Bald, Judith and England', pp. 139-153.

<sup>83</sup> Lupus, I, p. 176.

<sup>84</sup> Tessier, 9, (Feb 842), pp. 24-25.



feature of his charters since 841.<sup>85</sup> It wasn't until 852, nearly a decade after her death, that Charles instituted the commemoration of his mother and this was in the context of the joint commemoration of his parents as a couple. Prayers for the repose of their souls and, in some monasteries annual commemorative meals for their anniversaries, were incorporated into his charters. Thus Judith's anniversary was marked at Marmoutier<sup>86</sup>; Chalons sur Marne<sup>87</sup>; Macon<sup>88</sup>; St Denis<sup>89</sup>; St Martin, Tours<sup>90</sup>; St Quentin<sup>91</sup>; Fosses<sup>92</sup>; St Medard, Soissons<sup>93</sup>; Lyons<sup>94</sup>; Paris<sup>95</sup>; St Philibert<sup>96</sup>; St Martin d'Autun<sup>97</sup> and Montieramey<sup>98</sup>. Eventually, in 862, he completed her donation of land to St. Martin's: the closeness of the date of this charter - 23rd April - to her anniversary (19<sup>th</sup> April) suggests that she was in his thoughts or on his conscience. In this charter Charles specified that the revenues from his mother's Melun estate were

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<sup>85</sup> Examples from the early years of the reign: Tessier, 4, (Sept 841), p. 14-15; *ibid*, 9, (Feb 842), pp. 24-5; *ibid*, 21, (Mar 843), pp. 51-52; *ibid*. 22, (May 843), pp. 54-59.

<sup>86</sup> Tessier, 147 (3rd April, 852) p. 389.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 153 (1st May, 853) p. 405.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 162 (21st May, 854) p. 429.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*., 220 (31st Aug, 860) p. 554 and later: *ibid*., 238 (20th April, 862) p. 55; *ibid*., 246 (19th Sept, 862) p. 55; *ibid*., 300 (29th Aug, 867) p. 158; *ibid*., 379 (27th Mar 875) p. 349.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*., 239 (23rd April, 862) p and later: *ibid*., 307 (27th Dec, 867) p.180; *ibid*., 441 (1st Aug, 877) p. 489.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*., 251 (12th Jan, 863) p. 75.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*., 299 (20 Jun, 867) p. 158.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*., 338 (c866-870) p. 253.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*., 355 (Oct-Nov, 871) p .290.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*., 364 (12th May, 872) p. 315.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 378 (19th Mar, 875) p. 345.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 444 (Aug, 877) pp. 498-9.



to be used to fund two annual meals for twenty paupers to commemorate the anniversary of her death, his father's death and the date of his own coronation.<sup>99</sup> At Attigny on April 20<sup>th</sup>, the day after the anniversary of her death, Charles instituted a similar commemorative meal at St Denis.<sup>100</sup>

Charles also remembered his mother as the empress in the letter he wrote to pope Nicholas in 867 concerning the case of Ebo. From our perspective of remembrance what is interesting is how Charles chooses to represent his mother, thirty years after the event, at the assembly at Thionville in 835 where she interceded with the bishops and the emperor on behalf of the disgraced Ebo. Charles portrays his mother as an agent of moral authority and canonical rectitude: it was as a result of her initiative that Ebo resigned and was not deposed. Queenly virtue and moral authority were not, however, to be the dominant themes in the re-telling of Judith's history. The association between Judith and sexual scandal lived on. It may have been an irritant to Charles the Bald. Bernard of Septimania was captured and executed by Charles in 844. Jane Martindale has suggested that Charles was partly motivated by the accusations of adultery in 830.<sup>101</sup> This scandalous story would not go away and in the ninth century found its most vivid and fantastic treatment in Radbert's *Epitaphium*, written in 852 for the monks of Corbie, where Judith and Bernard are demonised figures who threaten the saintly figure of Wala and the values of his community.<sup>102</sup> It is ironic to reflect that in the ninth century Corbie also commemorated the anniversary

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 460 (c866-877) p. 513.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 239, (April 862) p. 40.

<sup>100</sup> The charter is dated on the day after her anniversary, *ibid.*, 238, (20th April 862), p. 31.

<sup>101</sup> 'Charles the Bald and the Kingdom of Aquitaine', in *Court and Kingdom*, pp. 115-138 at p. 120 see also F Lot and L Halphen, *Le Regne de Charles le Chauve* (840-877), vol I, Paris (1909) pp. 99-100 with note 3 tracing the development of stories on the theme of Judith and Bernard into the central middle ages.

<sup>102</sup> Ward, 'Agobard and Paschasius', p. 23.

of the empress with prayers and a meal.<sup>103</sup> Judith's representation in medieval accounts of the reign relied more on anti-feminine stereotypes of the wicked queen than any grounding in the reality of her experience. By the eleventh century a full-blown myth of Judith as adulterous queen and murderer of an archbishop had developed in Odbert's *passio* of Frederic of Utrecht.<sup>104</sup> In the twelfth century Otto of Freising established what was to become the dominant and enduring historical interpretation on the reign of Louis the Pious when he described the emperor, like King Ahab, as a man persuaded to evil by his wife. The overwhelmingly negative judgement of historians on the reign of Louis the Pious and Judith's causal role in the disintegration of Charlemagne's empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries histories of Germany and Europe was thus set in train.

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<sup>103</sup> The evidence is found in an interpolation in a manuscript of Adalhard's *staudes*, L d'Achéry, *Spicilegium*, vol I, Paris (1723) p. 590. Judith's anniversary was also commemorated by the following communities: Reichenau: *Necrologium Augiae Divitis*, MGH Necrol. Germ. I, ed. Baumann, Berlin, (1888), p. 275 and *Annales Augienses*, MGH SS I, p. 68; St Gall: *Libri anniversariorum et necrologium monasterii sancti Galli*, MGH Necrol. Germ. I, p. 472; Weingarten: MGH SS I, p. 65; Prüm: Wandalbert, *Martyrologium*, Poetae 2, p. 584.

<sup>104</sup> *Passio Friderici episcopi Traiectensis*, ed O Holder-Egger, MGH SS 15, p. 351.



## Conclusion

Extricated from the confines both of a melodramatic historiography and often-hostile contemporary sources, the empress Judith has emerged as a far less powerful, and indeed power-hungry, individual than the empress-queen presented by Dümmler.<sup>1</sup> She can no longer be pushed forward as the ‘fall-guy’ to take the blame for the alleged destruction of Charlemagne’s imperial project, the Bavarian ‘*femme fatale*’ who single-handedly steered Louis the Pious’ leaky ship of state onto the rocks of familial civil war. Lord Acton insisted that ‘praise is the shipwreck of the historian’, and the attempt to recover a life, whether obscured by praise or blame, is always a worthwhile historical enterprise.<sup>2</sup> Judith, a pivotal figure in the reign of Louis the Pious, has been recovered here and in spite of the limitations of the surviving evidence, an individual rather than a stereotype has emerged.

Between Louis the Pious’ marriage to Judith in 819 and his death in 840 there was a significant development in Carolingian queenship. Rituals and symbols, new ideas about queenly office and authority, are discernible. Judith is the first queen for whom there is evidence of both coronation and acclamation at marriage. In Hrabanus’ contemporary portrait of Judith, offered in 834 on her return from Tortona, she may be the first identifiable queen to be represented crowned and blessed by the protecting right hand of God.<sup>3</sup> And when Agobard attacked the regime and household of the imperial couple he articulated his concerns in terms of the unfitness of both Louis and Judith, of the ruling pair, to hold office: Judith’s sexual misconduct and moral turpitude disbarred her from occupying the position of queen, of charge of the affairs of the palace.<sup>4</sup> Ideas about queenly status were expressed in a variety of ways,

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<sup>1</sup> See above, Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> ‘.. praise is the shipwreck of historians, his preferences betray him more than his aversions’. *A Lecture on the Study of History*, London, (1895), p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> See above, chapter 7.

<sup>4</sup> See above, chapter 6.



sometimes sophisticated but others seemingly insignificant but no less revealing. In the 820s Ermold couched his plea to Judith to secure his return to the court in the language he used to address the queen of heaven.<sup>5</sup> In the 830s, Prudentius identified Louis and Judith as the '*augusti*', the imperial pair. Judith's status as queen and empress was described in language, ritual and symbol but it was also grounded in political fact: Agobard, Hrabanus, Ebo and Walahfrid, as well all as her stepsons Pippin and Lothar, all recognized that Judith had power, the ability to pursue a strategy and effect a course of action both by the disposition of patronage or political favour and by the promotion of the claims of Charles the Bald to a Frankish kingdom. The evidence from Judith's career suggests that the office of queen existed not only on the level of image and ideology, but also in reality.

It has been argued throughout this study that the reign of Louis the Pious saw the promotion of a new model of Carolingian kingship which enhanced the status of the queen. Biology and the psychology of human relationships are as important as ideology in this development. It may seem perverse to comment on the longevity of a woman who was probably dead before the age of forty but Judith had remarkable longevity both as queen and as a court politician. She governed the royal household for over twenty years, discharging all the obligations of queenship that Abbot Adalahard had envisaged in the *DOP*.<sup>6</sup> There were other courtiers who might have matched Judith in terms of their continued presence in the palace, (Louis' half-brother, Drogo, for example), but none held high office at court continuously throughout the 820s and 30s. Hugh and Matfred, the 'made men' as it were of the royal entourage in the mid 820s, (or so Ermold would have us believe), and certainly the significant *palatini* to be trusted with key military expeditions, ended the decade 'dishonoured', and as rebels.<sup>7</sup> They never returned to their earlier position of intimacy with Louis or, indeed, Judith. Count Bernard's occupation of the office of chamberlain from 829, which necessitated close co-operation with the queen, did not

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<sup>5</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

survive the palace coup of 830 which successfully excluded him from the palace by accusing him of adultery with the empress. Judith did not just stay the course by virtue of her longevity as queen, she also had the right psychology: she seems to have had staying power. She knew, or learnt fast, just how to handle herself at court and become a political player as well as wife, mother and queen. Judith weathered all political storms and scandals. She is the one courtier, and *only* woman, whose patronage can be tracked in the imperial diplomas across two decades. Leaders of the Frankish church, such as Ebo of Rheims, Frotharius of Toul, and Einhard and Hrabanus sought her favour; young monastic intellectuals such as Lupus and Walahafid looked towards the court and the empress to advance their careers.<sup>8</sup> And, according to Nithard and the Astronomer, in the last years of the reign she led a group of courtiers who worked for a settlement with Lothar.<sup>9</sup> A consequence of Judith's more than twenty-year occupancy of the position of queen and empress was that her actions, behavioural style and personality came in some way to define the role. Charles the Bald, who grew up close to his mother and father in the royal household, certainly had the opportunity to observe Judith's queenship in action. We can only speculate on how this may have influenced Charles the Bald and his queen Ermintrude.<sup>10</sup>

But what was Judith like? Well-educated, politically shrewd, socially adept, resourceful in a crisis, sexually attractive, and above all biologically successful (she died the mother of a king), it is possible to surmise Judith's character from her interests and actions. The shaping of Carolingian queenship in the reign of Louis the Pious may well have been a direct consequence of her personality and capabilities. It has been argued that Judith certainly made a distinctive contribution to the formation of Carolingian queenship but she operated within constraints. Queenship developed in the reign of Louis the Pious because, ultimately, it was relevant to the needs of

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<sup>8</sup> See above, chapters 3 and 7.

<sup>9</sup> See above, chapter 7.

<sup>10</sup> They did, of course, name their eldest child Judith after the empress.



male kingship. A key mechanism for the development of ideas about both kingship and queenship in the ninth century was the theology of Christian marriage. The promotion of a Christian morality of marriage and the family enabled Louis the Pious to limit the claims to royal power to his own legitimate offspring and to exclude the wider Carolingian kin. In this way Louis gained added parental authority as Agobard found when faced with the near-impossible task of using Christian texts to justify the rebellion of sons against their father.<sup>11</sup> This focus on the indissoluble marriage bond, on the unit of husband and wife and their conjugal obligations towards one another, raised the status of the queen as mother, royal helpmeet and consort. Judith's career demonstrates, however, in the context of the political realities of the reign of Louis the Pious just how conflictual the outcome of this new moralized, Christian kingship might be. Competition for Frankish kingdoms amongst Carolingian kin, including Louis's sons, continued throughout the reign. The presentation by Louis the Pious of a moral kingship and palace invited political dissidents and rebels to clothe their attacks on the regime in terms of the emperor's failure to maintain Augustine's '*pax domestica*'. The fitness of both Louis and Judith to hold office was judged in terms of their perceived ability to live by Christian family values. But in the end, however effective Judith was at negotiating the complex personal relationships of the palace, at forming political alliances, at managing the palace, at fulfilling the obligations of queen and of retaining her husband's favour, none of this could protect her in a political crisis from her inherent vulnerability as a second wife and stepmother. There was a contradiction and ambiguity about her status. Judith had opportunities to be powerful as a queen but, like all early medieval queens, as a woman she remained potentially powerless.<sup>12</sup>

It is not within the compass of this study to reflect on the changing nature of Carolingian queenship in the later ninth century. Yet it is clear both that crucial changes occurred in the reign of Louis the Pious and that queenship continued

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<sup>11</sup> See above, chapter 6.

<sup>12</sup> See Janet Nelson's remarks on this inherent contradiction in Carolingian queenship, 'Les reines', p. 132, *idem*, 'Medieval Queenship', p.203.



thereafter as a Frankish institution. Sedulius Scottus, in his treatise on Christian rulers for Charles the Bald saw the queen as a key support of royal rule;<sup>13</sup> and in 881 Hincmar of Rheims updated abbot Adalhard's advice book, the *De ordine Palatii*, with its chapter on the queen's management of the royal household for the young king Carloman.<sup>14</sup> Rome also knew the proper role of a Frankish queen: Pope Nicholas I rounded angrily on Lothar II in 856 for daring to let his concubine Waldrada usurp the functions and tasks that were proper to his wife and queen, the repudiated Theutberga.<sup>15</sup>

To study Judith and Carolingian queenship is essentially to study the complexities and conflicts of family life and, perhaps, therein lies the endless fascination of historians and their readers with monarchical government. Judith's career cannot be ripped out of context and simply 'biographised'. Her position within the Carolingian family as the emperor's second wife, mother of his youngest son, and stepmother to the sons of his first empress, shaped her experience as queen. Whilst my focus has been on Judith and the search to uncover and analyse her actions and representations in the reign, inevitably this study has been much concerned with Judith's relationship with Louis the Pious and with the politics of the reign itself. Kingship and queenship are inextricably linked. Just like husband and wife, seen through the eyes of the apostle Paul, St Augustine, and, of course, archbishop Agobard, they are indivisible. King and queen, emperor and empress are, 'one flesh'.

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<sup>13</sup> Sedulius Scottus, *De rectoribus Christianis*, PL 103, cap 5, col. 300.

<sup>14</sup> See above, chapter 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Epistolae*, ed. E Perels, MGH Epp 6, Berlin, (1925) p. 337.

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